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COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. 678.

ANTONINA BY WILKIE COLLINS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

**“ La ville cesse d’être :
Le Romain est esclave, et le Goth est son maître.”**
SCUDÉRI, *“Alarique.”*

EWALD FLÜGEL,

PALO ALTO CAL.

ANTONINA;

OR,

THE FALL OF ROME.

A ROMANCE OF THE FIFTH CENTURY.

BY

WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1863.

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VIRABELI OROFNATE

PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

TEN years have passed since this historical romance was published in its original form. The first volume, and part of the second, were written in the quiet and seclusion of my father's painting-room, to which I used to repair with my pen and ink, in the evening, almost as regularly as he used to enter it with his palette and brushes in the morning. His death suspended the progress of the story, when I had completed nearly half of it. I put ANTONINA aside, and addressed myself to the writing of another story, which lay far nearer to my heart — the story of my father's life. In the "Memoirs of William Collins, R. A.," I saw my name on the title-page of a printed and published book, for the first time.

After the publication of the biography, I once more opened the portfolio in which ANTONINA had been put away. How well I remember the feeling of discouragement with which I looked at the half-finished manuscript, and thought of the doubtful future, if I

ever succeeded in bringing my work to an end! Two years previously, I had tried my hand at writing a romance; had offered it to every publisher of fiction in London; and had, in each case, received my manuscript back, with a letter in which my proposals were politely declined. I am wise enough, now, to know that the publishers were right, and that my earliest effort, as a novelist, was made in the wrong direction. But, at the time, the remembrance of my first failure hung ominously over my mind, and darkened the fair white pages of my historical romance which were still to be filled with writing. However, the natural interest that I felt in my work, for its own sake, helped me to go on resolutely, if not hopefully, with my doubtful venture. Antonina was finished in Paris, and was sent in the first instance to the late Mr. Colburn — by whom the publication of the book was declined. Fully prepared for a second series of letters of refusal from the publishers, in acknowledgment of the offer of my second work of fiction, I next applied to Mr. Bentley, who, to my surprise and delight, at once accepted the book. Antonina (bound in great splendour) was published in three volumes; and was received by the critical authorities with such a chorus of praise as has never been sung over me since. The favourable verdict of the reviews (whether merited or not) was endorsed, in time, by the readers; many of my literary “elders

and betterers" kindly adding their special tribute of encouragement and approval. In short, Antonina opened to me a career as a novelist, and that career I have continued to follow to the present time.

The book which thus decided my vocation in life, is now presented to the reader in a compact form. It would be idle to say that I do not look back at my first work of fiction with a partiality which I cannot expect others to feel for it. But I am not, on that account, altogether blind to its defects. My later and better experience shows me blemishes in treatment and in style, which it is now too late to remove from these pages. I can only hope I am justified in believing that there are merits in this performance, which may fairly be set against the faults. Antonina may, I think, claim to be founded on a well-chosen subject. The treatment of that subject, however far it may be from rising to the importance of one of the grandest past events which the world has ever witnessed, is at least free from the fatal display of learning which has hopelessly damaged the popularity of the historical romance in these times. And the story (if I may be allowed to say so) has, with all its youthful crudities of execution, a certain freshness and vigour of dramatic interest, which may carry the reader to the end — though the characters live in the fifth century, and the events pass in the twilight magnificence of old Rome.

This is all I need say, in regard to the present edition. The critical principles that guided me in framing the story, with other explanatory matters relating to details, will be found in the extract from the original preface, which follows these lines.

HARLEY STREET, LONDON,

November, 1860.

EXTRACT FROM THE ORIGINAL PREFACE.

IN preparing to compose a fiction founded on history, the writer of these pages thought it no necessary requisite of such a work that the principal characters appearing in it should be drawn from the historical personages of the period. On the contrary, he felt that some very weighty objections attached to this plan of composition. He knew well that it obliged a writer to add largely from invention to what was actually known — to fill in with the colouring of romantic fancy the bare outline of historic fact — and thus to place the novelist's fiction in what he could not but consider most unfavourable contrast to the historian's truth. He was further by no means convinced that any story in which historical characters supplied the main agents, could be preserved in its fit unity of design and restrained within its due limits of development, without some falsification or confusion of historical dates — a species of poetical license of which he felt no disposition to avail himself, as it was his main anxiety to make his plot invariably arise, and proceed out of the great events of the era, exactly in the order in which they occurred.

Influenced therefore by these considerations, he thought that by forming all his principal characters from imagination, he should be able to mould them as he pleased to the main necessities of the story; to display them, without any impropriety, as influenced in whatever manner appeared most strikingly interesting by its minor incidents; and further to make them, on all occasions, without trammel or hindrance, the practical exponents of the spirit of the age, of all the various historical illustrations of the period, which the Author's researches among conflicting but equally important authorities had enabled him to garner up. While, at the same time, the appearance of verisimilitude necessary to an historical romance might, he imagined, be successfully preserved by the occasional introduction of the living characters of the era, in those portions of the plot comprising events with which they had been remarkably connected.

On this plan the present work has been produced.

To the fictitious characters alone is committed the task of representing the spirit of the age. The Roman Emperor, Honorius, and the Gothic King, Alaric, mix but little personally in the business of the story — only appearing in such events, and acting under such circumstances, as the records of history strictly authorise; but exact truth in respect to time, place, and circumstance is observed in every historical event introduced in the plot, from the period of the march of the Gothic invaders over the Alps to the close of the first barbarian blockade of Rome.

ANTONINA,
OR,
THE FALL OF ROME.

CHAPTER I.

Goisvintha.

THE mountains forming the range of Alps which border on the north-eastern confines of Italy, were, in the autumn of the year 408, already furrowed in numerous directions by the tracks of the invading forces of those northern nations generally comprised under the appellation of Goths. In some places these tracks were denoted on either side by fallen trees, and occasionally assumed, when half obliterated by the ravages of storms, the appearance of desolate and irregular marshes. In other places, they were less palpable. Here, the temporary path was entirely hidden by the incursions of a swollen torrent: there, it was faintly perceptible in occasional patches of soft ground, or partly traceable by fragments of abandoned armour, skeletons of horses and men, and remnants of the rude bridges which had once served for passage across a river, or transit over a precipice.

Among the rocks of the topmost of the range of mountains immediately overhanging the plains of Italy, and presenting the last barrier to the exertions of a traveller, or the march of an invader, there lay, at the beginning of the fifth century, a little lake. Bounded on three sides by precipices, its narrow banks barren alike of verdure or habitations, and its dark stagnant waters, brightened but rarely by the presence of the lively sunlight; this solitary spot — at all times mournful — presented, on the autumn of the day when our story commences, an aspect of desolation at once dismal to the eye and oppressive to the heart.

It was near noon; but no sun appeared in the heaven. The dull clouds, monotonous in colour and form hid all beauty in the firmament, and shed heavy darkness on the earth. Dense, stagnant vapours clung to the mountain summits; from the drooping trees dead leaves and rotten branches sunk, at intervals, on the oozy soil, or whirled over the gloomy precipice; and a small, steady rain fell, slow and unintermitting, upon the deserts around. Standing upon the path which armies had once trodden, and which armies were still destined to tread, and looking towards the solitary lake, you heard, at first, no sound but the regular dripping of the rain drops from rock to rock; you saw no prospect but the motionless waters at your feet, and the dusky crags which shadowed them from above. When, however, impressed by the mysterious loneliness of the place, the eye grew more penetrating, and the ear more attentive, a cavern became apparent in the precipices

round the lake; and, in the intervals of the heavy rain drops, was faintly perceptible the sound of a human voice.

The mouth of the cavern was partly concealed by a large stone, on which were piled some masses of rotten brushwood, as if for the purpose of protecting any inhabitant it might contain from the coldness of the atmosphere without. Placed at the eastward boundary of the lake, this strange place of refuge commanded a view not only of the rugged path immediately below it, but of a large plot of level ground at a short distance to the west, which overhung a second and lower range of rocks. From this spot might be seen far beneath, on days when the atmosphere was clear, the olive grounds that clothed the mountain's base; and, beyond, stretching away to the distant horizon, the plains of fated Italy, whose destiny of defeat and shame was now hastening to its dark and fearful accomplishment.

The cavern, within, was low and irregular in form. From its rugged walls the damp oozed forth upon its floor of decayed moss. Lizards and noisome animals had tenanted its comfortless recesses undisturbed, until the period we have just described, when their miserable rights were infringed on for the first time by human intruders.

A woman crouched near the entrance of the place. More within, on the driest part of the ground, lay a child asleep. Between them were scattered some withered branches and decayed leaves, which were ar-

ranged as if to form a fire. In many parts this scanty collection of fuel was slightly blackened; but, wetted as it was by the rain, all efforts to light it permanently had evidently been fruitless.

The woman's head was bent forwards, and her face, hid in her hands, rested on her knees. At intervals she muttered to herself, in a hoarse, moaning voice. A portion of her scanty clothing had been removed to cover the child. What remained on her was composed, partly of skins of animals, partly of coarse cotton cloth. In many places this miserable dress was marked with blood, and her long, flaxen hair bore upon its dishevelled locks the same ominous and repulsive stain.

The child seemed scarcely four years of age, and showed on his pale, thin face, all the peculiarities of his Gothic origin. His features seemed to have been once beautiful, both in expression and form; but a deep wound, extending the whole length of his cheek, had now deformed him for ever. He shivered and trembled in his sleep, and every now and then mechanically stretched forth his little arms towards the dead cold branches that were scattered before him. Suddenly a large stone became detached from the rock in a distant part of the cavern, and fell noisily to the ground. At this sound he woke with a scream — raised himself — endeavoured to advance towards the woman, and staggered backward against the side of the cave. A second wound in the leg had wreaked that destruction on his vigour, which the first had effected on his beauty. He was a cripple.

At the instant of his awakening the woman had started up. She now raised him from the ground, and taking some herbs from her bosom, applied them to his wounded cheek. By this action her dress became discomposed: it was stiff at the top with coagulated blood, which had evidently flowed from a cut in her neck. All her attempts to compose the child were in vain; he moaned and wept piteously, muttering, at intervals, his disjointed exclamations of impatience at the coldness of the place and the agony of his recent wounds. Speechless and tearless the wretched woman looked vacantly down on his face. There was little difficulty in discerning from that fixed, distracted gaze, the nature of the tie that bound the mourning woman to the suffering boy. The expression of rigid and awful despair that lowered in her fixed, gloomy eyes; the livid paleness that discoloured her compressed lips; the spasms that shook her firm, commanding form, mutely expressing in the divine eloquence of human emotion, that between the solitary pair there existed the most intimate of earth's relationships — the connexion of mother and child.

For some time no change occurred in the woman's demeanour. At last, as if struck by some sudden suspicion, she rose, and clasping the child in one arm, displaced with the other the brushwood at the entrance of her place of refuge, cautiously looking forth on all that the mists left visible of the western landscape. After a short survey, she drew back as if re-assured by the unbroken solitude of the place, and turning

towards the lake, looked down upon the black waters at her feet.

"Night has succeeded to night," she muttered gloomily; "and has brought no succour to my body, and no hope to my heart! Mile on mile have I journeyed, and danger is still behind, and loneliness for ever before. The shadow of death deepens over the boy; the burden of anguish grows weightier than I can bear. For *me*, friends are murdered, defenders are distant, possessions are lost. The God of the Christian priests has abandoned us to danger, and deserted us in woe. It is for me to end the struggle for us both. Our last refuge has been in this place — our sepulchre shall be here as well!"

With one last look at the cold and comfortless sky, she advanced to the very edge of the lake's precipitous bank. Already the child was raised in her arms, and her body bent to accomplish successfully the fatal spring, when a sound in the east — faint, distant and fugitive, — caught her ear. In an instant her eye brightened, her chest heaved, her cheek flushed. She exerted the last relics of her wasted strength to gain a prominent position upon a ledge of the rocks behind her, and waited in an agony of expectation for a repetition of that magic sound.

In a moment more she heard it again — for the child, stupefied with terror at the action that had accompanied her determination to plunge with him into the lake, now kept silence, and she could listen undisturbed. To unpractised ears, the sound that so en-

tranced her would have been scarcely audible. Even the experienced traveller would have thought it nothing more than the echo of a fallen stone among the rocks in the eastward distance. But to her it was no unimportant sound, for it gave the welcome signal of deliverance and delight.

As the hour wore on, it came nearer and nearer, tossed about by the sportive echoes, and now clearly betraying that its origin was, as she had at first divined, the note of the Gothic trumpet. Soon the distant music ceased, and was succeeded by another sound low and rumbling, as of an earthquake afar off, or a rising thunder-storm, and changing, ere long, to a harsh confused noise, like the rustling of a mighty wind through whole forests of brushwood. At this instant the woman lost all command over herself; her former patience and caution deserted her; reckless of danger, she placed the child upon the ledge on which she had been standing; and, though trembling in every limb, succeeded in mounting so much higher on the crag as to gain a fissure near the top of the rock, which commanded an uninterrupted view of the vast tracts of uneven ground, leading in an easterly direction to the next range of precipices and ravines.

One after another, the long minutes glided on; and though much was still audible, nothing was yet to be seen. At length, the shrill sound of the trumpet again rang through the dull misty air; and the next instant the advanced guard of an army of Goths emerged from the distant woods.

Then, after an interval, the multitudes of the main body thronged through every outlet in the trees, and spread in dusky masses over the desert ground that lay between the woods and the rocks about the borders of the lake. The front ranks halted, as if to communicate with the crowds of the rear-guard, and the stragglers among the baggage waggons, who still poured forth, apparently in interminable hosts, from the concealment of the distant trees. The advanced troops, evidently with the intention of examining the roads, still marched rapidly on, until they gained the foot of the ascent leading to the crags to which the woman still clung, and from which, with eager attention, she still watched their movements.

Placed in a situation of the extremest peril, her strength was her only preservative against the danger of slipping from her high and narrow elevation. Hitherto, the moral excitement of expectation had given her the physical power necessary to maintain her position; but just, as the leaders of the guard arrived at the cavern, her over-wrought energies suddenly deserted her; her hands relaxed their grasp; she tottered, and would have sunk backwards to instant destruction, had not the skins wrapped about her bosom and waist, become entangled with a point of one of the jagged rocks immediately around her. Fortunately — for she could utter no cry — the troops halted at this instant to enable their horses to gain breath. Two among them at once perceived her position and detected her nation. They mounted the rocks; and,

while one possessed himself of the child, the other succeeded in rescuing the mother and bearing her safely to the ground.

The snorting of horses, the clashing of weapons, the confusion of loud, rough voices, which now startled the native silence of the solitary lake, and which would have bewildered and overwhelmed most persons in the woman's exhausted condition, seemed, on the contrary, to re-assure her feelings and re-animate her powers. She disengaged herself from her preserver's support; and taking her child in her arms, advanced towards a man of gigantic stature, whose rich armour sufficiently announced that his position in the army was one of command.

"I am Goisvintha" — said she, in a firm, calm voice — "sister to Hermanric. I have escaped from the massacre of the hostages of Aquileia with one child. Is my brother with the army of the King?"

This declaration produced a marked change in the bystanders. The looks of indifference; or curiosity, which they had at first cast on the fugitive, changed to the liveliest expression of wonder and respect. The chieftain whom she had addressed raised the visor of his helmet so as to uncover his face, answered her question in the affirmative, and ordered two soldiers to conduct her to the temporary encampment of the main army in the rear. As she turned to depart, an old man advanced, leaning on his long, heavy sword, and accosted her thus: —

"I am Withimer, whose daughter was left hostage

with the Romans, in Águileia. Is she of the slain, or of the escaped?"

"Her bones rot under the city walls," was the answer. "The Romans made of her a feast for the dogs."

No word, or tear, escaped the old warrior. He turned in the direction of Italy; but, as he looked downwards towards the plains, his brow lowered, and his hands tightened mechanically round the hilt of his enormous weapon.

The same gloomy question was propounded to Goisvintha by the two men who guided her to the army, that had been asked by their aged comrade. It received the same terrible answer, which was borne with the same stern composure, and followed by the same ominous glance in the direction of Italy, as in the instance of the veteran Withimer.

Leading the horse that carried the exhausted woman with the utmost care, and yet with wonderful rapidity, down the paths which they had so recently ascended, the men in a short space of time reached the place where the army had halted; and displayed to Goisvintha, in all the majesty of numbers and repose, the vast martial assemblage of the warriors of the North.

No brightness gleamed from their armour; no banners waved over their heads; no music sounded among their ranks. Backed by the dreary woods which still disgorged unceasing additions to the war-like multitude already encamped; surrounded by the

desolate crags which showed dim, wild, and majestic, through the darkness of the mist; covered with the dusky clouds which hovered motionless over the barren mountain tops, and poured their stormy waters on the uncultivated plains; all that the appearance of the Goths had of solemnity in itself, was in awful harmony with the cold and mournful aspect that the face of Nature had assumed. Silent — menacing — dark, — the army looked the fit embodiment of its leader's tremendous purpose — the subjugation of Rome.

Conducting Goisvintha quickly through the front files of warriors, her guides, pausing at a spot of ground which shelved upwards at right angles with the main road from the woods, desired her to dismount; and, pointing to the group that occupied the place, said: "Yonder is Alaric the king; and with him, is Hermanric thy brother."

At whatever point of view it could have been regarded, the assemblage of persons thus indicated to Goisvintha must have arrested inattention itself. Near a confused mass of weapons, scattered on the ground, reclined a group of warriors apparently listening to the low, muttered conversation of three men of great age, who rose above them, seated on pieces of rock, and whose long, white hair, rough skin dresses, and lean tottering forms, appeared in strong contrast with the iron-clad and gigantic figures of their auditors beneath. Above the old men, on the high road, was one of Alaric's waggons; and on the heaps of baggage piled against its clumsy wheels, had been chosen the

resting-place of the future conqueror of Rome. The top of the vehicle seemed absolutely teeming with a living burden. Perched in every available nook and corner, were women and children of all ages, and weapons, and live stock of all varieties. Now, a child — lively, mischievous, inquisitive — peered forth over the head of a battering ram. Now, a lean, hungry sheep, advanced his inquiring nostrils sadly to the open air; and displayed by the movement, the head of a withered old woman, pillowed on his woolly flanks. Here, appeared a young girl, struggling half entombed in shields. There, gasped an emaciated camp-follower, nearly suffocated in heaps of furs. The whole scene, with its background of great woods, drenched in a vapour of misty rain; with its striking contrasts at one point and its solemn harmonies at another, presented a vast combination of objects that either startled or awed; — a gloomy conjunction of the menacing and the sublime.

Bidding Goisvintha wait near the waggon, one of her conductors approached and motioned aside a young man standing near the king. As the warrior rose to obey the demand, he displayed with all the physical advantages of his race, an ease and elasticity of movement, unusual among the men of his nation. At the instant when he joined the soldier who had accosted him, his face was partially concealed by an immense helmet, crowned with a boar's head, the mouth of which, forced open at death, gaped wide, as if still raging for prey. But the man had scarcely stated his

errand, when he startled violently, removed the grim appendage of war, and hastened bare-headed to the side of the waggon where Goisvintha awaited his approach.

The instant he was beheld by the woman, she hastened to meet him: placed the wounded child in his arms, and greeted him with these words: —

“Your brother served in the armies of Rome when our people were at peace with the Empire. Of his household and his possessions this is all that the Romans have left!”

She ceased; and for an instant the brother and sister regarded each other in touching and expressive silence. Though, in addition to the general characteristics of country, the countenances of the two, naturally bore the more particular evidences of community of blood, all resemblance between them, at this instant — so wonderful is the power of expression over feature — had utterly vanished. The face and manner of the young man, (he had numbered only twenty years,) expressed a deep sorrow; manly in its stern tranquillity; sincere in its perfect innocence of display. As he looked on the child, his blue eyes — bright, piercing, and lively — softened like a woman's; his lips, hardly hidden by his short beard, closed and quivered; and his chest heaved under the armour that lay upon its noble proportions. There was in this simple, speechless, tearless melancholy — this exquisite consideration of triumphant strength for suffering weakness, something almost sublime; opposed as it was to the emotions of malignity and despair, that

appeared in Goisvintha's features. The ferocity that gleamed from her dilated, glaring eyes; the sinister markings that appeared round her pale and parted lips; the swelling of the large veins, drawn to their extremest point of tension on her lofty forehead, so distorted her countenance, that the brother and sister, as they stood together, seemed in expression to have changed sexes for the moment. From the warrior, came pity for the sufferer — from the mother, indignation for the offence.

Arousing himself from his melancholy contemplation of the child, and as yet answering not a word to Goisvintha, Hermanric mounted the waggon, and placing the last of his sister's offspring in the arms of a decrepit old woman, who sat brooding over some bundles of herbs spread out upon her lap, addressed her thus: —

“These wounds are from the Romans. Revive the child, and you shall be rewarded from the spoils of Rome.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” chuckled the crone; “Hermanric is an illustrious warrior, and shall be obeyed. Hermanric is great, for his arm can slay; but Brunechild is greater than he, for her cunning can cure!”

As if anxious to verify this boast before the warrior's eyes, the old woman immediately began the preparation of the necessary dressings from her store of herbs; but Hermanric waited not to be a witness of her skill. With one final look at the pale exhausted child, he slowly descended from the waggon, and ap-

proaching Goisvintha drew her towards a sheltered position near the ponderous vehicle. Here he seated himself by her side, prepared to listen with the deepest attention to her recital of the scenes of terror and suffering through which she had so recently passed.

"You," she began, "born while our nation was at peace; transported from the field of war to those distant provinces where tranquillity still prevailed; preserved throughout your childhood from the chances of battle; advanced to the army in your youth, only when its toils are past, and its triumphs are already at hand — you alone, have escaped the miseries of our people, to partake in the glory of their approaching revenge.

"Hardly had a year passed since you had been removed from the settlements of the Goths when I wedded Priulf. The race of triflers to whom he was then allied, spite of their Roman haughtiness, deferred to him in their councils, and confessed among their legions that he was brave. I saw myself with joy the wife of a warrior of renown; I believed, in my pride, that I was destined to be the mother of a race of heroes; when suddenly there came news to us that the Emperor Theodosius was dead. Then followed anarchy among the people of the soil, and outrages on the liberties of their allies, the Goths. Ere long, the call to arms arose among our nation. Soon our wag-gons of war were rolled across the frozen Danube; our soldiers quitted the Roman camp; our husbandmen took their weapons from their cottage walls; we that

were women prepared with our children to follow our husbands to the field; and Alaric, the king, came forth as the leader of our hosts.

“We marched upon the territories of the Greeks. — But how shall I tell you of the events of those years of war that followed our invasion; of the glory of our victories; of the hardships of our defences; of the miseries of our retreats; of the hunger that we vanquished; of the diseases that we endured; of the shameful peace that was finally ratified, against the wishes of our king! How shall I tell of all this, when my thoughts are on the massacre from which I have just escaped — when those first evils, though once remembered in anguish, are, even now, forgotten in the superior horrors that ensued!

“The truce was made. Alaric departed with the remnant of his army, and encamped at Æmona, on the confines of that land which he had already invaded, and which he is now prepared to conquer. Between our king and Stilicho, the general of the Romans, passed many messages, for the leaders disputed on the terms of the peace that should be finally ordained. Meanwhile, as an earnest of the Gothic faith, bands of our warriors, and among them Priulf, were despatched into Italy to be allies once more of the legions of Rome, and with them they took their wives and their children, to be detained as hostages in the cities throughout the land.

“I and my children were conducted to Aquileia. In a dwelling within the city we were lodged with our

possessions. It was night when I took leave of Priulf, my husband, at the gates. I watched him as he departed with the army, and, when the darkness hid him from my eyes, I re-entered the town; from which I am the only woman of our nation who has escaped alive."

As she pronounced these last words, Goisvintha's manner, which had hitherto been calm and collected, began to change; she paused abruptly in her narrative, her head sunk upon her breast, her frame quivered as if convulsed with violent agony. When she turned towards Hermanric after an interval of silence to address him again, the same malignant expression lowered over her countenance that had appeared on it, when she presented to him her wounded child; her voice became broken, hoarse, and unfeminine; and pressing closely to the young man's side, she laid her trembling fingers on his arm, as if to bespeak his most undivided attention.

"Time grew on," she continued, "and still there came no tidings that the peace was finally secured. We, that were hostages, lived separate from the people of the town; for we felt enmity towards each other even then. In my captivity there was no employment for me, but patience — no pursuit, but hope. Alone with my children, I was wont to look forth over the sea, towards the camp of our King; but day succeeded to day, and his warriors appeared not on the plains; nor did Priulf return with the legions to encamp before the gates of the town. So, I mourned in my

loneliness; for my heart yearned towards the homes of my people; I longed once more to look upon my husband's face, and to behold again the ranks of our warriors, and the majesty of their battle array.

“But, already, when the great day of despair was quickly drawing near, a bitter outrage was preparing for me alone. The men who had hitherto watched us were changed, and of the number of the new guards was one, who cast on me the eyes of lust. Night after night he poured his entreaties into my unwilling ear; for, in his vanity and shamelessness, he believed that I, who was Gothic and the wife of a Goth, might be won by him whose parentage was but Roman! Soon, from prayers he rose to threats; and, one night, appearing before me with smiles, he cried out — that Stilicho, whose desire was to make peace with the Goths, had suffered, for his devotion to our people, the penalty of death; that a time of ruin was approaching for us all; and that he alone — whom I despised — could preserve me from the anger of Rome. As he ceased he approached me; but I, who had been in many battle-fields, felt no dread at the prospect of war; and I spurned him with laughter from my presence.

“Then, for a few nights more, my enemy approached me not again. Until, one evening, as I sat on the terrace before the house, with the child that you have beheld, a helmet-crest suddenly fell at my feet, and a voice cried to me from the garden beneath — ‘Priulf thy husband has been slain in a quarrel by

the soldiers of Rome! Already the legions with whom he served are on their way to the town; for a massacre of the hostages is ordained. Speak but the word, and I can save thee even yet!

“I looked on the crest. It was bloody, and it was *his!* For an instant my heart writhed within me, as I thought on my warrior whom I had loved! Then, as I heard the messenger of death retire, cursing, from his lurking-place in the garden, I recollected that now my children had none but their mother to defend them; and that peril was preparing for them from the enemies of their race. Besides the little one in my arms, I had two that were sleeping in the house. As I looked round, bewildered and in despair, to see if a chance were left us to escape, there rang through the evening stillness the sound of a trumpet; and the tramp of armed men was audible in the street beneath. Then, from all quarters of the town, rose, as one sudden sound, the shrieks of women and the yells of men. Already, as I rushed towards my children’s beds, the fiends of Rome had mounted the stairs, and waved in bloody triumph their reeking swords! I gained the steps; and as I looked up, they flung down at me the body of my youngest child. Oh, Hermanric! Hermanric! it was the most beautiful and the most beloved! What the priests say that God should be to us, that, the fairest one of my offspring, was to me! As I saw it mutilated and dead — I, who but an hour before had hushed it on my bosom to rest! — my courage forsook me, and when the murderers advanced on me, I stag-

gered and fell. I felt the sword-point enter my neck; I saw the dagger gleam over the child in my arms; I heard the death-shriek of the last victim above; and then my senses failed me, and I could listen and move no more!

“Long must I have lain motionless at the foot of those fatal stairs; for when I awoke from my trance, the noises in the city were hushed; and from her place in the firmament the moon shone softly into the deserted house. I listened, to be certain that I was alone with my murdered children. No sound was in the dwelling; the assassins had departed, believing that their labour of blood was ended when I fell beneath their swords; and I was able to crawl forth in security, and to look my last upon my offspring that the Romans had slain. The child that I held to my breast still breathed. I staunched with some fragments of my garment the wounds that he had received, and laying him gently by the stairs — in the moonlight, so that I might see him when he moved — I groped in the shadow of the wall for my first murdered and my last born: for that youngest and fairest one of my offspring, whom they had slaughtered before my eyes! When I touched the corpse, it was wet with blood; I felt its face and it was cold beneath my hands; I raised its body in my arms, and its limbs already were rigid in death! Then I thought of the eldest child, who lay dead in the chamber above. But my strength was failing me fast. I had an infant who might yet be preserved; and I knew that, if

morning dawned on me in the house, all chances of escape were lost for ever. So though my heart was cold within me, at leaving my child's corpse to the mercy of the Romans — I took up the dead and the wounded one in my arms, and went forth into the garden, and thence towards the seaward quarter of the town.

“I passed through the forsaken streets. Sometimes I stumbled against the body of a child — sometimes the moonlight showed me the death-pale face of some woman of my nation, whom I had loved, stretched upward to the sky; but I still advanced until I gained the wall of the town, and heard on the other side the waters of the river running onward to the Port of Aquileia and the sea.

“I looked around. The gates I knew were guarded and closed. By the wall was the only prospect of escape; but its top was high and its sides were smooth, when I felt them with my hands. Despairing and wearied, I laid my burdens down where they were hidden by the shade, and walked forward a few paces, for to remain still was a torment that I could not endure. At a short distance, I saw a soldier sleeping against the wall of a house. By his side was a ladder placed against the window. As I looked up, I beheld the head of a corpse resting on its top. The victim must have been lately slain, for her blood still dripped slowly down into an empty wine-pot that stood within the soldier's reach. When I saw the ladder, hope revived within me. I removed it to the wall — I

mounted and laid my dead child on the great stones at its top — I returned, and placed my wounded boy by the corpse. Slowly, and with many efforts, I dragged the ladder upwards, until from its own weight one end fell to the ground on the other side. As I had arisen so I descended. In the sand of the river bank I scraped a hole, and buried there the corpse of the infant; for I could carry the weight of two no longer. Then with my wounded child I reached some caverns that lay onward near the sea shore. There throughout the next day I lay hidden — alone with my sufferings of body, and my affliction of heart — until the night came on, when I set forth on my journey to the mountains; for I knew that at Æmona, in the camp of the warriors of my people, lay the only refuge that was left to me on earth. Feebly and slowly, hiding by day and travelling by night, I kept on my way until I gained that lake among the rocks, where the guards of the army came forward and rescued me from death.”

She ceased. Throughout the latter portion of her narrative, her demeanour had been calm and sad; and as she dwelt, with the painful industry of grief, over each minute circumstance connected with the bereavements she had sustained, her voice softened to those accents of quiet mournfulness, which make impressive the most simple words, and render musical the most unsteady tones. It seemed as if those tenderer and kinder emotions, which the attractions of her offspring had once generated in her character, had at the

bidding of memory become revived in her manner, while she lingered over the recital of their deaths. For a brief space of time she looked fixedly and anxiously upon the countenance of Hermanric, which was half averted from her, and expressed a fierce and revengeful gloom that sat unnaturally on its noble lineaments. Then turning from him, she buried her face in her hands, and made no effort more to attract him to attention or incite him to reply.

This solemn silence kept by the bereaved woman and the brooding man had lasted but a few minutes, when a harsh, trembling voice was heard from the top of the waggon, calling at intervals — “Hermanric! Hermanric!”

At first the young man remained unmoved by those discordant and repulsive tones. They repeated his name, however, so often and so perseveringly, that he noticed them ere long; and rising suddenly, as if impatient of the interruption, advanced towards the side of the waggon from which the mysterious summons appeared to come.

As he looked up towards the vehicle the voice ceased; and he saw that the old woman to whom he had confided the child was the person who had called him so hurriedly but a few moments before. Her tottering body, clothed in bear skins, was bent forward over a large triangular shield of polished brass, on which she leant her lank, shrivelled arms. Her head shook with a tremulous, palsied action — a leer, half smile, half grimace, distended her withered lips,

and lightened her sunken eyes. Sinister, cringing, repulsive; her face, livid with the reflection from the weapon that was her support, and her figure, scarcely human in the rugged garments that encompassed its gaunt proportions, she seemed a deformity set up by evil spirits to mock the majesty of the human form — an embodied satire on all that is most deplorable in infirmity and most disgusting in age.

The instant she discerned Hermanric, she stretched her body out still further over the shield; and pointing to the interior of the waggon, muttered softly that one fearful and expressive word — dead!

Without waiting for any further explanation, the young Goth mounted the vehicle, and gaining the old woman's side, saw stretched on her collection of herbs — beautiful in the sublime and melancholy stillness of death — the corpse of Goisvintha's last child.

"Is Hermanric wrath?" whined the hag, quailing before the steady rebuking glance of the young man. "When I said that Brunechild was greater than Hermanric, I lied. It is Hermanric that is most powerful! See, the dressings were placed on the wounds; and, though the child has died, shall not the treasures that were promised me be mine? I have done what I could, but my cunning begins to desert me, for I am old — old — old! I have seen my generation pass away! Aha! I am old, Hermanric, I am old!"

When the young warrior looked on the child, he saw that the hag had spoken truth, and that the victim had died from no fault of hers. Pale and serene, the

countenance of the boy showed how tranquil had been his death. The dressings had been skilfully composed and carefully applied to his wounds, but suffering and privation had annihilated the feebleness of human resistance in their march towards the last, dread goal; and the treachery of Imperial Rome had once more triumphed as was its wont, and triumphed over a child!

As Hermanric descended with the corpse, Goisvintha was the first object that met his eyes when he alighted on the ground. The mother received from him the lifeless burden without an exclamation or a tear. That emanation from her former and kinder self, which had been produced by the closing recital of her sufferings was henceforth, at the signal of her last child's death, extinguished in her for ever!

"His wounds had crippled him," said the young man, gloomily. "He could never have fought with the warriors! Our ancestors slew themselves when they were no longer vigorous for the fight. It is better that he has died!"

"Vengeance!" gasped Goisvintha, pressing up closely to his side. "We will have vengeance for the massacre of Aquileia! When blood is streaming in the palaces of Rome, remember my murdered children, and hasten not to sheathe thy sword!"

At this instant, as if to rouse still further the fierce determination that appeared already in the face of the young Goth, the voice of Alaric was heard command-

ing the army to advance. Hermanric started, and drew the panting woman after him to the resting-place of the king. There, armed at all points, and rising, by his superior stature, high above the throng around him, stood the dreaded captain of the Gothic hosts. His helmet was raised so as to display his clear blue eyes gleaming over the multitude around him: he pointed with his sword in the direction of Italy; and as, rank by rank, the men started to their arms, and prepared exultingly for the march, his lips parted with a smile of triumph, and ere he moved to accompany them he spoke thus: —

“Warriors of the Goths, our halt is a short one among the mountains; but, let not the weary repine, for the glorious resting-place that awaits our labours, is the City of Rome! The curse of Odin, when in the infancy of our nation he retired before the myriads of the Empire, it is our privilege to fulfil! That future destruction, which he denounced against Rome, it is ours to effect! Remember your hostages, that the Romans have slain; your possessions, that the Romans have seized; your trust, that the Romans have betrayed! Remember, that I, your king, have within me that supernatural impulse which never deceives, and which calls to me in a voice of encouragement — Advance, and the Empire is thine! Assemble the warriors, and the City of the World shall be delivered to the conquering Goths! Let us onward without delay! Our prey awaits us! Our triumph is near! Our vengeance is at hand!”

He paused; and at that moment, the trumpet gave signal for the march.

“Up! Up!” cried Hermanric, seizing Goisvintha by the arm, and pointing to the waggon which had already begun to move: “Make ready for the journey! I will charge myself with the burial of the child. Yet a few days and our encampment may be before Aquileia. Be patient, and I will avenge thee in the palaces of Rome!”

The mighty mass moved. The multitude stretched forth over the barren ground; and, even now, the warriors in front of the army might be seen by those in the rear mounting the last range of passes that lay between the plains of Italy and the Goths.

CHAPTER II.

The Court.

THE traveller who so far departs from the ordinary track of tourists in modern Italy, as to visit the city of Ravenna, remembers with astonishment, as he treads its silent and melancholy streets, and beholds vineyards and marshes spread over an extent of four miles between the Adriatic and the town, that this place, now half deserted, was once the most populous of Roman fortresses; and that where fields and woods now present themselves to his eyes, the fleets of the Empire once rode securely at anchor, and the merchant of Rome disembarked his precious cargoes at his warehouse door.

As the power of Rome declined, the Adriatic by a strange fatality, began to desert the fortress, whose defence it had hitherto secured. Coeval with the gradual degeneracy of the people, was the gradual withdrawal of the ocean from the city walls; until, at the beginning of the sixth century, a grove of pines already appeared where the port of Augustus once existed.

At the period of our story — though the sea had even then receded perceptibly — the ditches round the walls were yet filled, and the canals still ran through the city, in much the same manner as they intersect Venice at the present time.

On the morning that we are about to describe, the autumn had advanced some days since the events mentioned in the preceding chapter. Although the sun was now high in the eastern horizon, the restlessness produced by the heat emboldened a few idlers of Ravenna to brave the sultriness of the atmosphere, in the vain hope of being greeted by a breeze from the Adriatic, as they mounted the seaward ramparts of the town. On attaining their destined elevation, these sanguine citizens turned their faces with fruitless and despairing industry towards every point of the compass, but no breath of air came to reward their perseverance. Nothing could be more thoroughly suggestive of the undiminished universality of the heat, than the view, in every direction, from the position they then occupied. The stone houses of the city behind them, glowed with a vivid brightness overpowering to the strongest eyes.

The light curtains hung motionless over the lonely windows. No shadows varied the brilliant monotony of the walls, or softened the lively glitter on the waters of the fountains beneath. Not a ripple stirred the surface of the broad channel, that now replaced the ancient harbour. Not a breath of wind unfolded the scorching sails of the deserted vessels at the quay. Over the marshes in the distance hung a hot, quivering mist; and in the vineyards, near the town, not a leaf waved upon its slender stem. On the seaward side lay, vast and level, the prospect of the burning sand, and beyond it the main ocean, — waveless, torpid, and suffused in a flood of fierce brightness, — stretched out to the cloudless horizon that closed the sunbright view.

Within the town, in those streets where the tall houses cast a deep shadow on the flagstones of the road, the figures of a few slaves might, here and there, be seen sleeping against the walls, or gossiping languidly on the faults of their respective lords. Sometimes an old beggar might be observed, hunting on the well-stocked preserves of his own body the lively vermin of the South. Sometimes a restless child crawled from a doorstep to paddle in the stagnant waters of a kennel; but with the exception of these doubtful evidences of human industry the prevailing characteristic of the few groups of the lowest orders of the people which appeared in the streets was the most listless and utter indolence. All that gave splendour to the city at other hours of the day was at this period

hidden from the eye. The elegant courtiers reclined in their lofty chambers; the guards on duty ensconced themselves in angles of walls and recesses of porticos; the graceful ladies slumbered on perfumed couches in darkened rooms; the gilded chariots were shut into the carriage-houses; the prancing horses were confined in the stables; and even the wares in the market places were removed from exposure to the sun. It was clear that the luxurious inhabitants of Ravenna recognised no duties of sufficient importance, and no pleasures of sufficient attraction, to necessitate the exposure of their susceptible bodies to the noontide heat.

To give the reader some idea of the manner in which the indolent patricians of the Court loitered away their noon, and to satisfy, at the same time, the exigencies attaching to the conduct of this story, it is requisite to quit the lounging-places of the plebeians in the streets, for the couches of the nobles in the Emperor's palace.

Passing through the massive entrance gates, crossing the vast hall of the Imperial abode, with its statues, its marbles, and its guards in attendance; and thence, ascending the noble stair-case, the first object that might on this occasion have attracted the observer, when he gained the approaches to the private apartments, was a door at an extremity of the corridor, richly carved and standing half open. At this spot were grouped some fifteen or twenty individuals, who conversed by signs, and maintained in all their movements the most decorous and complete silence. Sometimes, one of the party stole on tiptoe to the door, and

looked cautiously through, returning almost instantaneously, and expressing to his next neighbour, by various grimaces, his immense interest in the sight he had just beheld. Occasionally, there came from this mysterious chamber, sounds resembling the cackling of poultry; varied, now and then, by a noise like the falling of a shower of small, light substances upon a hard floor. Whenever these sounds were audible, the members of the party outside the door looked round upon each other and smiled — some sarcastically, some triumphantly. A few among these patient expectants grasped rolls of vellum in their hands; the rest held nosegays of rare flowers, or supported in their arms small statues and pictures in mosaic. Of their number, some were painters and poets; some orators and philosophers; and some statuaries and musicians. Among such a motley assemblage of professions, remarkable in all ages of the world for fostering in their votaries the vice of irritability, it may seem strange that so quiet and orderly a behaviour should exist as that just described. But it is to be observed that in attending at the palace, these men of genius made sure at least of outward unanimity among their ranks, by coming equally prepared with one accomplishment, and equally animated by one hope: — they waited to employ a common agent — flattery; to attain a common end — gain.

The chamber thus sacred, even from the intrusion of intellectual inspiration, although richly ornamented, was of no remarkable extent. At other times the eye

might have wandered with delight on the exquisite plants and flowers, scattered profusely over a noble terrace, to which a second door in the apartment conducted; but, at the present moment, the employment of the occupant of the room was of so extraordinary a nature, that the most attentive observation must have missed all the inferior characteristics of the place, to settle immediately on its inhabitant alone.

In the midst of a large flock of poultry, which seemed strangely misplaced on a floor of marble and under a gilded roof, stood a pale, thin, debilitated youth, magnificently clothed, and holding in his hand a silver vase filled with grain, which he ever and anon distributed to the cackling multitude at his feet. Nothing could be more pitifully effeminate than the appearance of this young man. His eyes were heavy and vacant; his forehead low and retiring; his cheeks sallow; and his form curved as if with a premature old age. An unmeaning smile dilated his thin, colourless lips; and as he looked down on his strange favourites, he occasionally whispered to them a few broken expressions of endearment, almost infantine in their simplicity. His whole soul seemed to be engrossed by the labour of distributing his grain, and he followed the different movements of the poultry with an earnestness of attention, which seemed almost idiotic in its ridiculous intensity. If it be asked, why a person so contemptible as this solitary youth has been introduced with so much care, and described with so much minuteness, it must be answered, that, though destined

to form no important figure in this work, he played, from his position, a remarkable part in the great drama on which it is founded — for this feeder of chickens was no less a person than Honorius, Emperor of Rome.

It is the very imbecility of this man, at such a time as that we now write on, which invests his character with a fearful interest in the eye of posterity. In himself the impersonation of the meanest vices inherent in the vicious civilization of his period, to his feebleness was accorded the terrible responsibility of liberating the long-prisoned storm, whose elements we have attempted to describe in the preceding chapter. With just intellect enough to be capricious, and just determination enough to be mischievous, he was an instrument fitted for the uses of every ambitious villain who could succeed in gaining his ear. To flatter his puerile tyranny, the infatuated intriguers of the court rewarded the heroic Stilicho for the rescue of his country, with the penalty of death, and defrauded Alaric of the moderate concessions that they had solemnly pledged themselves to perform. To gratify his vanity, he was paraded in triumph through the streets of Rome, for a victory that others had gained. To pander to his arrogance, by an exhibition of the vilest privilege of that power which had been entrusted to him for good, the massacre of the helpless hostages, confided by Gothic honour to Roman treachery, was unhesitatingly ordained; and, finally, to soothe the turbulence of his unmanly fears, the last act of his

unscrupulous councillors, ere the empire fell, was to authorise his abandoning his people in the hour of peril, careless who suffered in defenceless Rome, while he was secure in fortified Ravenna. Such was the man under whom the mightiest of the world's structures was doomed to totter to its fall! Such was the figure destined to close a scene which Time and Glory had united to hallow and adorn! Raised and supported by a superhuman daring, that invested the nauseous horrors of incessant bloodshed with a rude and appalling magnificence, the mistress of nations was now fated to sink by the most ignoble of defeats, under the most abject of tremblers. For this had the rough old Kingdom shaken off its enemies by swarms from its vigorous arms! For this had the doubtful virtues of the Republic, and the perilous magnificence of the Empire, perplexed and astonished the world! In such a conclusion as Honorius, ended the dignified barbarities of a Brutus; the polished splendours of an Augustus, the unearthly atrocities of a Nero, and the immortal virtues of a Trajan! Vainly, through the toiling ages, over the ruin of her noblest hearts, and the prostitution of her grandest intellects, had Rome stridden pitilessly onward, grasping at the shadow — Glory; the fiat had now gone forth, that doomed her to possess herself finally, of the substance — Shame!


When the imperial trifer had exhausted his store of grain, and satisfied the cravings of his voracious favorites, he was relieved of his silver vase by two attendants. The flock of poultry was then ushered out

at one door, while the flock of geniuses was ushered in at the other.

Leaving the Emperor to cast his languid eyes over objects of art for which he had no admiration, and to open his unwilling ears to panegyric orations for which he had no comprehension, we proceed to introduce the reader to an apartment on the opposite side of the palace, in which are congregated all the beauty and elegance of his Court.

Imagine a room, two hundred feet long and proportionably broad. Its floor is mosaic, wrought into the loveliest patterns. Its sides are decorated with immense pillars of variegated marble, the recesses formed by which are occupied by statues, all arranged in exquisite variety of attitude, so as to appear to be offering to whoever approaches them, the rare flowers which it is the duty of the attendants to place in their hands. The ceiling is painted in fresco, in patterns and colours harmonising with those on the mosaic floor. The cornices are of silver, and decorated with mottoes from the amatory poets of the day, the letters of which are formed by precious stones. In the middle of the room is a fountain throwing up streams of perfumed water, and surrounded by golden aviaries, containing birds of all sizes and nations. Three large windows, placed at the eastern extremity of the apartment, look out upon the Adriatic, but are covered at this hour, from the outside, with silk curtains of a delicate green shade, which cast a soft, luxurious light over every object, but are so thinly woven and so skilfully arranged,

that the slightest breath of air which moves without, finds its way immediately to the languid occupants of the court waiting-room. The number of these individuals amounts to about fifty or sixty persons. By far the larger half of the assemblage are women. Their black hair tastefully braided into various forms, and adorned with flowers or precious stones, contrasts elegantly with the brilliant whiteness of the robes, in which they are for the most part clothed. Some of them are occupied in listlessly watching the movements of the birds in the aviaries; others hold a languid and whispered conversation with such of the courtiers as happen to be placed near them. The men exhibit in their dresses a greater variety of colour, and in their occupations a greater fertility of resource than the women. Their garments, of the lightest rose, violet, or yellow tints, diversify fantastically the monotonous white robes of their gentle companions. Of their employments, the most conspicuous are, playing on the lute, gaming with dice, teasing their lap-dogs, and insulting their parasites. Whatever their occupation, it is performed with little attention, and less enthusiasm. Some recline on their couches with closed eyes, as if the heat made the labour of using their organs of vision too much for them; others, in the midst of a conversation, suddenly leave a sentence unfinished, apparently incapacitated by lassitude from giving expression to the simplest ideas. Every sight in the apartment that attracts the eye, every sound that gains the ear, expresses a luxurious repose. No brilliant



light mars the pervading softness of the atmosphere; no violent colour materialises the light, ethereal hues of the dresses; no sudden noises interrupt the fitful and plaintive notes of the lute, jar with the soft twittering of the birds in the aviaries, or drown the still, regular melody of the ladies' voices. All objects, animate and inanimate, are in harmony with each other. It is a scene of spiritualised indolence — a picture of dreamy beatitude, in the inmost sanctuary of unruffled repose.

Amid this assemblage of beauty and nobility, the members of which were rather to be generally noticed than particularly observed, there was, however, one individual who, both by the solitary occupation he had chosen and his accidental position in the room, was personally remarkable among the listless patricians around him.

His couch was placed nearer the window than that of any other occupant of the chamber. Some of his indolent neighbours — especially those of the gentler sex — occasionally regarded him with mingled looks of admiration and curiosity; but no one approached him, or attempted to engage him in conversation. A piece of vellum lay by his side, on which, from time to time, he traced a few words, and then resumed his reclining position, apparently absorbed in reflection, and utterly regardless of all the occupants — male and female — of the imperial apartment. Judging from his general appearance, he could scarcely be twenty-five years of age. The conformation of the upper part

of his face was thoroughly intellectual — the forehead high, broad, and upright; the eyes clear, penetrating, and thoughtful — but the lower part was, on the other hand, undeniably sensual. The lips, full and thick, formed a disagreeable contrast to the delicate chiselling of the straight Grecian nose; while the fleshiness of the chin, and the jovial redundancy of the cheeks, were, in their turn, utterly at variance with the character of the pale, noble forehead, and the expression of the quick, intelligent eyes. In stature he was barely of the middle size; but every part of his body was so perfectly proportioned that he appeared, in any position, taller than he really was. The upper part of his dress, thrown open from the heat, partly disclosed the fine statuesque formation of his neck and chest. His ears, hands, and feet were of that smallness and delicacy which is held to denote the aristocracy of birth; and there was in his manner that indescribable combination of unobtrusive dignity and unaffected elegance, which in all ages and countries, and through all changes of manners and customs, has rendered the demeanour of its few favoured possessors the instantaneous interpreter of their social rank.

While the patrician was still occupied over his vellum, the following conversation took place in whispers between two ladies placed near the situation he occupied.

“Tell me, Camilla,” said the eldest and stateliest of the two, “who is the courtier so occupied in composition? I have endeavoured, I know not how often,

to catch his eye; but the man will look at nothing but his roll of vellum, or the corners of the room."

"What, are you so great a stranger in Italy as not to know him!" replied the other, a lively girl of small, delicate form, who fidgeted with persevering restlessness on her couch, and seemed incapable of giving an instant's steady attention to any of the objects around her. "By all the saints, martyrs, and relics of my uncle, the bishop!"

"Hush! You should not swear!"

"Not swear! Why I am making a new collection of oaths, intended solely for ladies' use! I intend to set the fashion of swearing by them myself."

"But answer my question, I beseech you! Will you never learn to talk on one subject at a time?"

"Your question — ah, your question! — It was about the Goths?"

"No, no! It was about that man who is incessantly writing, and will look at nobody. He is almost as provoking as Camilla herself!"

"Don't frown so! That man, as you call him, is the senator Vetricio."

The lady started. It was evident that Vetricio had a reputation.

"Yes!" continued the lively Camilla. "That is the accomplished Vetricio; but he will be no favourite of yours, for he sometimes swears — swears by the ancient gods, too, which is forbidden!"

"He is handsome."

"Handsome! he is beautiful! Not a woman in Italy but is languishing for him!"

"I have heard that he is clever."

"Who has not? He is the author of some of the most celebrated sauces of the age. Cooks of all nations worship him as an oracle. Then he writes poetry, and composes music, and paints pictures! And, as for philosophy — he talks it better than my uncle the bishop!"

"Is he rich?"

"Ah! my uncle the bishop! — I must tell you how I helped Vetrano to make a satire on him! When I was staying with him at Rome, I used often to see a woman in a veil taken across the garden to his study; so, to perplex him, I asked him who she was. And he frowned and stammered, and said, at first, that I was disrespectful; but he told me, afterwards, that she was an Arian whom he was labouring to convert. So I thought I should like to see how this conversion went on, and I hid myself behind a bookcase. But it is a profound secret; I tell it you in confidence."

"I don't care to know it. Tell me about Vetrano."

"How ill-natured you are! Oh! I shall never forget how we laughed, when I told Vetrano what I had seen! He took up his writing materials, and made the satire immediately. The next day all Rome heard of it. My uncle was speechless with rage! I believe he suspected me; but he gave up converting the Arian lady; and —"

"I ask you again — Is Vetrano rich?"

"Half Sicily is his. He has immense estates in Africa, olive-grounds in Syria, and corn-fields in Gaul. I was present at an entertainment he gave at his villa in Sicily. He fitted up one of his vessels from the descriptions of the furnishing of Cleopatra's galley, and made his slaves swim after us, as attendant Tritons. Oh! it was magnificent!"

"I should like to know him."

"You should see his cats! He has a perfect legion of them at his villa. Twelve slaves are employed to attend on them. He is mad about cats, and declares that the old Egyptians were right to worship them. He told me, yesterday, that when his largest cat is dead, he will canonize her, in spite of the Christians! And then he is so kind to his slaves! They are never whipped or punished, except when they neglect or disfigure themselves; for Vetrico will allow nothing that is ugly or dirty to come near him. You must visit his banquetting hall at Rome. It is perfection!"

"But why is he here?"

"He has come to Ravenna, charged with some secret message from the Senate, and has presented a rare breed of chickens to that foolish —"

"Hush: you may be overheard!"

"Well! — to that *wise* Emperor of ours! Ah! the palace has been so pleasant since he has been here!"

At this instant the above dialogue — from the frivolity of which the universally-learned readers of modern times will, we fear, recoil with contempt.—

was interrupted by a movement on the part of its hero, which showed that his occupation was at an end. With the elaborate deliberation of a man who disdains to exhibit himself as liable to be hurried by any mortal affair, Vetricio slowly folded up the vellum he had now filled with writing; and, depositing it in his bosom, made a sign to a slave, who happened to be then passing near him with a dish of fruit.

Having received his message, the slave retired to the entrance of the apartment, and, beckoning to a man who stood outside the door, motioned him to approach Vetricio's couch.

This individual immediately hurried across the room, to the window where the elegant Roman awaited him. Not the slightest description of him is needed; for he belonged to a class with which moderns are as well acquainted as ancients — a class which has survived all changes of nations and manners — a class which came in with the first rich man in the world, and will only go out with the last. In a word, he was a parasite.

He enjoyed, however, one great superiority over his modern successors. In his day flattery was a *profession* — in ours it has sunk to a *pursuit*.

"I shall leave Ravenna this evening," said Vetricio.

The parasite made three low bows and smiled ecstasically.

"You will order my travelling equipage to be at the palace gates an hour before sunset."

The parasite declared he should never forget the honour of the commission, and left the room.

The sprightly Camilla, who had overheard Vetranio's command, jumped off her couch, as soon as the parasite's back was turned, and, running up to the senator, began to reproach him for the determination he had just formed.

"Have you no compunction at leaving me to the dulness of this horrible palace, to satisfy your idle fancy for going to Rome," said she, pouting her pretty lip, and playing with a lock of the dark brown hair that clustered over Vetranio's brow.

"Has the senator Vetranio so little regard for his friends, as to leave them to the mercy of the Goths?" said another lady, advancing with a winning smile to Camilla's side.

"Ah, those Goths!" exclaimed Vetranio, turning to the last speaker. "Tell me, Julia, is it not reported that the barbarians are really marching into Italy?"

"Everybody has heard of it. The Emperor is so discomposed by the rumour, that he has forbidden the very name of the Goths to be mentioned in his presence again."

"For my part," continued Vetranio, drawing Camilla towards him, and playfully tapping her little dimpled hand, "I am in anxious expectation of the Goths, for I have designed a statue of Minerva, for which I can find no model so fit as a woman of that troublesome nation. I am informed upon good authority,

that their limbs are colossal, and their sense of propriety most obediently pliable under the discipline of the purse."

"If the Goths supply you with a model for anything," said a courtier who had joined the group, while Vetranio was speaking, "it will be with a representation of the burning of your palace at Rome, which they will enable you to paint in blood, from the inexhaustible reservoir of your own wounds."

The individual who uttered this last observation, was remarkable among the brilliant circle around him, by his excessive ugliness. Urged by his personal disadvantages, and the loss of all his property at the gaming-table, he had latterly personated a character, the accomplishments attached to which rescued him by their disagreeable originality in that frivolous age, from oblivion or contempt. He was a Cynic philosopher.

His remark, however, produced no other effect on his hearers' serenity, than to excite their merriment. Vetranio laughed, Camilla laughed, Julia laughed. The idea of a troop of barbarians ever being able to burn a palace at Rome, was too wildly ridiculous for any one's gravity; and as the speech was repeated in other parts of the room, in spite of their dulness and lassitude the whole Court laughed.

"I know not why I should be amused at that man's nonsense," said Camilla, suddenly becoming grave, at the very crisis of a most attractive smile, "when I am so melancholy at the thought of Vetranio's departure.

What will become of me when he is gone? Alas! who will be left in the palace to compose songs to my beauty and music for my lute? Who will paint me as Venus, and tell me stories about the ancient Egyptians and their cats? Who at the banquet will direct what dishes I am to choose, and what I am to reject? Who?" — and poor little Camilla stopped suddenly in her enumeration of the pleasures she was about to lose, and seemed on the point of weeping as piteously as she had been laughing rapturously but the instant before.

Vetranio was touched — not by the compliment to his more intellectual powers, but by the admission of his convivial supremacy, as a guide to the banquet, contained in the latter part of Camilla's remonstrance. The sex were then, as now, culpably deficient in gastronomic enthusiasm. It was, therefore, a perfect triumph, to have made a convert to the science, of the youngest and loveliest of the ladies of the Court.

"If she can gain leave of absence," said the gratified senator, "Camilla shall accompany me to Rome, and shall be present at the first celebration of my recent discovery of a Nightingale Sauce."

Camilla was in ecstasies. She seized Vetranio's cheeks between her rosy little fingers, kissed him as enthusiastically as a child kisses a new toy, and darted gaily off to prepare for her departure.

"Vetranio would be better employed," sneered the Cynic, "in inventing new salves for future wounds, than new sauces for future nightingales! His carcass

will be carved by Gothic swords as a feast for the worms, before his birds are spitted with Roman skewers as a feast for his guests! Is this a time for cutting statues and concocting sauces? Fie on the senators who abandon themselves to such pursuits as Vetricano's!"

"I have other designs," replied the object of all this moral indignation, looking with insulting indifference on the Cynic's repulsive countenance, "which, from their immense importance to the world, must meet with universal approval. The labour that I have just achieved forms one of a series of three projects, which I have for some time held in contemplation. The first is an analysis of the new priesthood; the second a true personification, both by painting and sculpture, of Venus; the third a discovery of what has been hitherto uninvented — a nightingale sauce. By the inscrutable wisdom of Fate, it has been so willed that the last of the objects I proposed to myself has been the first attained. The sauce is composed, and I have just concluded on this vellum the ode that is to introduce it at my table. The analysis will be my next labour. It will take the form of a treatise, in which, making the experience of past years the groundwork of prophecy for the future, I shall show the precise number of additional dissensions, controversies, and quarrels that will be required to enable the new priesthood to be themselves the destroyers of their own worship. I shall ascertain by an exact computation the year in which this destruction will be consum-

mated; and I have by me as the materials for my work an historical summary of Christian schisms and disputes in Rome for the last hundred years. As for my second design, the personification of Venus, it is of appalling difficulty. It demands an investigation of the women of every nation under the sun; a comparison of the relative excellencies and peculiarities of their several charms; and a combination of all that is loveliest in the infinite variety of their most prominent attractions, under one form. To forward the execution of this arduous project, my tenants at home and my slave-merchants abroad have orders to send to my villa in Sicily all women who are born most beautiful in the Empire, or can be brought most beautiful from the nations around. I will have them displayed before me, of every shade in complexion and of every peculiarity in form! At the fitting period I shall commence my investigations, undismayed by difficulty and determined on success. Never yet has the true Venus been personified! Should I accomplish the task, how exquisite will be my triumph! My work will be the altar at which thousands will offer up the softest emotions of the heart. It will free the prisoned imagination of youth, and freshen the fading recollections on the memory of age!"

Vetranio paused. The Cynic was struck dumb with indignation. A solitary zealot for the Church, who happened to be by, frowned at the analysis. The ladies tittered at the personification. The gastronomists chuckled at the nightingale sauce; but for the first few

minutes no one spoke. During this temporary embarrassment, Vetricio whispered a few words in Julia's ear; and — just as the Cynic was sufficiently recovered to retort — accompanied by the lady, he quitted the room.

Never was popularity more unalloyed than Vetricio's. Gifted with a disposition, the pliability of which adapted itself to all emergencies, his generosity disarmed enemies, while his affability made friends. Munificent without assumption, successful without pride, he obliged with grace, and shone with safety. People enjoyed his hospitality, for they knew that it was disinterested; and admired his acquirements, for they felt that they were unobtrusive. Sometimes (as in his dialogue with the Cynic) the whim of the moment, or the sting of a sarcasm, drew from him a hint at his station, or a display of his eccentricities; but as he was always the first soon afterwards to lead the laugh at his own outbreak, his credit as a noble suffered nothing by his infirmity as a man. Gaily and attractively he moved in all grades of the society of his age, winning his social laurels in every rank, without making a rival to dispute their possession, or an enemy to detract from their value.

On quitting the court waiting-room, Vetricio and Julia descended the palace stairs, and passed into the Emperor's garden. Used generally as an evening lounge, this place was now untenanted, save by the few attendants engaged in cultivating the flower beds, and watering the smooth, shady lawns. Entering one

of the most retired of the numerous summer-houses among the trees, Vetricio motioned his companion to a seat; and then abruptly addressed her in the following words: —

“I have heard that you are about to depart for Rome — Is it true?”

He asked this question in a low voice, and with a manner in its earnestness strangely at variance with the volatile gaiety which had characterised him, but a few moments before, among the nobles of the court. As Julia answered him in the affirmative, his countenance expressed a lively satisfaction; and, seating himself by her side, he continued the conversation thus: —

“If I thought that you intended to stay for any length of time in the city, I should venture upon a fresh extortion from your friendship, by asking you to lend me your little villa at Aricia!”

“You shall take with you to Rome an order on my steward to place everything there at your entire disposal.”

“My generous Julia! You are of the gifted few who really know how to confer a favour! Another woman would have asked me why I wanted the villa — you give it unreservedly. So delicate an unwillingness to intrude on a secret, reminds me that the secret should now be yours!”

To explain the easy confidence that existed between Vetricio and Julia, it is necessary to inform the reader that the lady — although still attractive in ap-

pearance — was of an age to muse on her past, rather than to meditate on her future conquests. She had known her eccentric companion from his boyhood, had been once flattered in his verses, and was sensible enough — now that her charms were on the wane — to be as content with the friendship of the senator, as she had formerly been enraptured with the adoration of the youth.

“You are too penetrating” — resumed Vetranio, after a short pause — “not to have already suspected that I only require your villa to assist me in the concealment of an intrigue. So peculiar is my adventure in its different circumstances, that to make use of my palace as the scene of its development, would be to risk a discovery which might produce the immediate subversion of all my designs. But I fear the length of my confession will exceed the duration of your patience!”

“You have aroused my curiosity. I could listen to you for ever!”

“A short time before I took my departure from Rome for this place,” continued Vetranio, “I encountered an adventure of the most extraordinary nature, which has haunted me with the most extraordinary perseverance, and which will have, I feel assured, the most extraordinary results. I was sitting one evening in the garden of my palace on the Pincian Mount, occupied in trying a new composition on my lute. In one of the pauses of the melody, which was tender and plaintive, I heard sounds that resembled the sobbing of some one in distress

among the trees behind me. I looked cautiously round, and discerned half-hidden by the verdure, the figure of a young girl, who appeared to be listening to the music with the most entranced attention. Flattered by such a testimony to my skill, and anxious to gain a nearer view of my mysterious visitant, I advanced towards her hiding-place, forgetting in my haste to continue playing on the lute. The instant the music ceased, she discerned me and disappeared. Determined to behold her, I again struck the chords, and in a few minutes I saw her white robe once more among the trees. I redoubled my efforts. I played with the utmost expression the most pathetic parts of the melody. As if under the influence of a charm, she began to advance towards me, now hesitating, now moving back a few steps, now approaching, half reluctantly, half willingly, until utterly vanquished by the long trembling close of the last cadence of the air, she ran suddenly up to me, and falling at my feet, raised her hands as if to implore my pardon."

"Truly this was no common tribute to your skill! Did she speak to you?"

"She uttered not a word," continued Vetrano. "Her large soft eyes, bright with tears, looked piteously up in my face, her delicate lips trembled as if she wished to speak, but dared not, her smooth round arms were the very perfection of beauty. Child as she seemed in years and emotions, she looked a woman in loveliness and form. For the moment, I was too much astonished by the suddenness of her supplicating action to move

or speak. As soon as I recovered myself, I attempted to fondle and console her, but she shrunk from my embrace, and seemed inclined to escape from me again, until I touched once more the strings of the lute, and then she uttered a subdued exclamation of delight, nestled close up to me, and looked into my face with such a strange expression of mingled adoration and rapture, that I declare to you, Julia, I felt as bashful before her as a boy."

"*You* bashful! The Senator Vetricio bashful!" exclaimed Julia, looking up with an expression of the most unfeigned incredulity and astonishment.

"The lute," pursued Vetricio gravely, without heeding the interruption, "was my sole means of procuring any communication with her. If I ceased playing, we were as strangers; if I resumed, we were as friends. So, subduing the notes of the instrument, while she spoke to me in a soft tremulous musical voice, I still continued to play. By this plan I discovered at our first interview, that she was the daughter of one Numerian, that she was on the point of completing her fourteenth year, and that she was called Antonina. I had only succeeded in gaining this mere outline of her story, when, as if struck by some sudden apprehension, she tore herself from me with a look of the utmost terror, and entreating me not to follow her if I ever desired to see her again, she disappeared rapidly among the trees."

"More and more wonderful! And in your new

character of a bashful man, you doubtless obeyed her injunctions?"

"I did," replied the Senator; "but the next evening, I revisited the garden grove; and, as soon as I struck the chords, as if by magic, she again approached. At this second interview I learned the reason of her mysterious appearances and departures. Her father, she told me, was one of a new sect, who imagine — with what reason it is impossible to comprehend — that they recommend themselves to their Deity, by making their lives one perpetual round of bodily suffering and mental anguish. Not content with distorting all his own feelings and faculties, this tyrant perpetrated his insane austerities upon the poor child as well. He forbade her to enter a theatre, to look on sculpture, to read poetry, to listen to music. He made her learn long prayers, and attend to interminable sermons. He allowed her no companions of her own age — not even girls like herself. The only recreation that she could obtain was the permission — granted with much reluctance and many rebukes — to cultivate a little garden which belonged to the house they lived in, and joined at one point the groves round my palace. There, while she was engaged over her flowers, she first heard the sound of my lute. For many months before I had discovered her, she had been in the habit of climbing the inclosure that bounded her garden, and hiding herself among the trees to listen to the music, whenever her father's concerns took him abroad. She had been discovered in this occupation by an old man appointed

to watch her in his master's absence. The attendant however, on hearing her confession, not only promised to keep her secret, but permitted her to continue her visits to my grove whenever I chanced to be playing there on the lute. Now the most mysterious part of this matter is, that the girl seemed — in spite of his severity towards her — to have a great affection for her surly parent; for, when I offered to deliver her from his custody, she declared that nothing could induce her to desert him; not even the attraction of living among fine pictures and hearing beautiful music every hour in the day. But, I see I weary you; and indeed, it is evident from the length of the shadows, that the hour of my departure is at hand. Let me then pass from my introductory interviews with Antonina, to the consequences that had resulted from them when I set forth on my journey to Ravenna."

"I think I can imagine the consequences already!" said Julia, smiling maliciously.

"Begin then," retorted Vetrano, "by imagining that the strangeness of this girl's situation, and the originality of her ideas, invested her with an attraction for me, which the charms of her person and age contributed immensely to heighten. She delighted my faculties as a poet, as much as she fired my feelings as a man; and I determined to lure her from the tyrannical protection of her father, by the employment of every artifice that my ingenuity could suggest. I began by teaching her to exercise for herself the talent which had so attracted her in another. By the familiarity

engendered on both sides by such an occupation, I hoped to gain as much in affection from her as she acquired in skill from me, but, to my astonishment, I still found her as indifferent towards the master and as tender towards the music, as she had appeared at our first interview. If she had repelled my advances, if they had overwhelmed her with confusion, I could have adapted myself to her humour, I should have felt the encouragement of hope; but the coldness, the carelessness, the unnatural, incomprehensible ease with which she received even my caresses, utterly disconcerted me. It seemed as if she could only regard me as a moving statue, as a mere impersonation, immaterial as the science I was teaching her. If I spoke, she hardly looked on me; if I moved, she scarcely noticed the action. I could not consider it dislike, she seemed too gentle to nourish such a feeling for any creature on earth. I could not believe it coldness, she was all life, all agitation, if she heard only a few notes of music. When she touched the chords of the instrument, her whole frame trembled. Her eyes, mild, serious, and thoughtful when she looked on *me*, now brightened with delight, now softened with tears, when she listened to the lute. As day by day, her skill in music increased, so her manner towards me grew more inexplicably indifferent. At length, weary of the constant disappointments that I experienced, and determined to make a last effort to touch her heart, by awakening her gratitude, I presented her with the very lute which she had at first heard, and on which she had now learned to play.

Never have I seen any human being so rapturously delighted as this incomprehensible girl, when she received the instrument from my hands. She alternately wept and laughed over it, she kissed it, fondled it, spoke to it, as if it had been a living thing. But when I approached to suppress the expressions of thankfulness that she poured on me for the gift, she suddenly hid the lute in her robe, as if afraid that I should deprive her of it, and hurried rapidly from my sight. The next day I waited for her at our accustomed meeting-place, but she never appeared. I sent a slave disguised to her father's house, but she would hold no communication with him. It was evident, that now she had gained her end, she cared no more to behold me. In my first moments of irritation, I determined to make her feel my power, if she despised my kindness; but reflection convinced me, from my acquaintance with her character, that in such a matter force was impolitic, that I should risk my popularity in Rome, and engage myself in an unworthy quarrel to no purpose. Dissatisfied with myself, and disappointed in the girl, I obeyed the first dictates of my impatience, and seizing the opportunity afforded by my duties in the senate of escaping from the scene of my defeated hopes, I departed angrily for Ravenna."

"Departed for Ravenna!" cried Julia, laughing outright. "Oh, what a conclusion to the adventure! I confess it, Vetricio, such consequences as these are beyond all imagination!"

"You laugh, Julia," returned the Senator, a little

piqued; "but hear me to the end and you will find that I have not yet resigned myself to defeat. For the few days that I have remained here, Antonina's image has incessantly troubled my thoughts. I perceive that my inclination, as well as my reputation, is concerned in subduing her ungrateful aversion. I suspect that my anxiety to gain her, will, if unremoved, so far influence my character, that from Vetricio the Serene, I shall be changed into Vetricio the Sardonic. Pride, honour, curiosity, and love, all urge me to her conquest. To prepare for my banquet is an excuse to the Court for my sudden departure from this place; the real object of my journey is Antonina alone."

"Ah, now I recognise my friend again in his own character," remarked the lady approvingly.

"You will ask me how I purpose to obtain another interview with her?" continued Vetricio. "I answer, that the girl's attendant has voluntarily offered himself as an instrument for the prosecution of my plans. The very day before I departed from Rome, he suddenly presented himself to me, in my garden, and proposed to introduce me into Numerian's house — having first demanded, with the air more of an equal than an inferior, whether the report that I was still a secret adherent of the old religion, of the worship of the gods, was true. Suspicious of the fellow's motives (for he abjured all recompense as the reward of his treachery), and irritated by the girl's recent ingratitude, I treated his offer with contempt. Now, however, that my dissatisfaction is calmed and my anxiety aroused, I am

determined, at all hazards, to trust myself to this man, be his motives for aiding me what they may. If my efforts at my expected interview — and I will not spare them — are rewarded with success, it will be necessary to obtain some refuge for Antonina, that will neither be suspected nor searched. For such a hiding-place, nothing can be more admirably adapted than your Arician villa. Do you — now that you know for what use it is intended — repent of your generous disposal of it in aid of my design?”

“I am delighted to have had it to bestow on you,” replied the liberal Julia, pressing Vetrano’s hand. “Your adventure is indeed uncommon — I burn with impatience to hear how it will end. Whatever happens, you may depend on my secrecy, and count on my assistance. But see, the sun is already verging towards the west; and yonder comes one of your slaves to inform you, I doubt not, that your equipage is prepared. Return with me to the palace, and I will supply you with the letter necessary to introduce you as master to my country abode.”

* * * * *

The worthy citizens of Ravenna assembled in the square before the palace, to behold the senator’s departure, had entirely exhausted such innocent materials for amusement, as consisted in staring at the guards, catching the clouds of gnats that hovered about their ears, and quarrelling with each other; and were now reduced to a state of very noisy and unanimous impatience, when their discontent was suddenly and most

effectually appeased by the appearance of the travelling equipage with Vetrico and Camilla, outside the palace gates.

Uproarious shouts greeted the appearance of the senator and his magnificent retinue; but they were increased a hundred-fold, when the chief slaves, by their master's command, each scattered a handful of small coin among the poorer classes of the spectators. Every man among that heterogeneous assemblage of rogues, fools, and idlers, roared his loudest and capered his highest, in honour of the generous patrician. Gradually and carefully the illustrious travellers moved through the crowd around them to the city gate. And thence, amid incessant shouts of applause, raised with imposing unanimity of lung, and wrought up to the most distracting discordancy of noise, Vetrico and his lively companion departed in triumph for Rome.

* * * * *

A few days after this event, the citizens were again assembled at the same place and hour — probably to witness another patrician departure, when their ears were assailed by the unexpected sound, produced by the call to arms, which was followed immediately by the closing of the city gates. They had scarcely asked each other the meaning of these unusual occurrences, when a peasant, half frantic with terror, rushed into the square, shouting out the terrible intelligence that the Goths were in sight!

The courtiers heard the news, and starting from a luxurious repast, hurried to the palace windows to be-

hold the portentous spectacle. For the remainder of the evening the banqueting-tables were unapproached by the guests.

The wretched Emperor was surprised among his poultry by that dreaded intelligence. He too, hastened to the windows; and, looking forth, saw the army of avengers passing in contempt his solitary fortress, and moving swiftly onward towards defenceless Rome. Long after the darkness had hidden the masses of that mighty multitude from his eyes, did he remain staring helplessly upon the fading landscape, in a stupor of astonishment and dread; and for the first time since he had possessed them, his flocks of fowls were left for that night unattended by their master's hand.

CHAPTER III.

Rome.

THE perusal of the title to this chapter will we fear excite emotions of apprehension, rather than of curiosity, in the breasts of experienced readers. They will doubtless imagine that it is portentous of long rhapsodies on those wonders of antiquity, the description of which has long since become absolutely nauseous to them by incessant iteration. They will foresee wailings over the Palace of the Cæsars, and meditations among the arches of the Colosseum, loading a long series of weary paragraphs to the very chapter's end; and, considerably anxious to spare their attention a task from which it recoils, they will unanimously

hurry past the dreaded desert of conventional reflection, to alight on the first oasis that may present itself, whether it be formed by a new division of the story, or suddenly indicated by the appearance of a dialogue. Animated, therefore, by apprehensions such as these, we hasten to assure them, that in no instance will the localities of our story trench upon the limits of the well-worn Forum, or mount the arches of the exhausted Colosseum. It is with the beings, and not the buildings of old Rome, that their attention is to be occupied. We desire to present them with a picture of the inmost emotions of the times, — of the living, breathing, actions and passions of the people of the doomed Empire. Antiquarian topography and classical architecture we leave to abler pens, and resign to other readers.

It is, however, necessary that the sphere in which the personages of our story are about to act, should be in some measure indicated, in order to facilitate the comprehension of their respective movements. That portion of the extinct city which we design to revive has left few traces of its existence in the modern town. Its sites are traditionary — its buildings are dust. The church rises where the temple once stood; and the wine-shop now lures the passing idler, where the bath invited his ancestor of old.

The walls of Rome are in extent, at the present day, the same as they were at the period of which we now write. But here, all analogy between the ancient and modern city ends. The houses that those walls

were once scarcely wide enough to inclose, have long since vanished, and their modern successors occupy but a third of the space once allotted to the capital of the Empire.

Beyond the walls, immense suburbs stretched forth in the days of old. Gorgeous villas, luxurious groves, temples, theatres, baths — interspersed by colonies of dwellings belonging to the lower orders of the people — surrounded the mighty city. Of these innumerable abodes, hardly a trace remains. The modern traveller, as he looks forth over the site of the famous suburbs, beholds, here and there, a ruined aqueduct, or a crumbling tomb, tottering on the surface of a pestilential marsh.

The present entrance to Rome by the Porta del Popolo, occupies the same site as the ancient Flaminian Gate. Three great streets now lead from it towards the southern extremity of the city, and form with their tributaries the principal portion of modern Rome. On one side they are bounded by the Pincian Hill, on the other by the Tiber. Of these streets, those nearest the river occupy the position of the famous Campus Martius, those on the other side the ancient approaches to the gardens of Sallust and Lucullus, on the Pincian Mount.

On the opposite bank of the Tiber (gained by the Ponte St. Angelo, formerly the Pons Elius), two streets pierced through an irregular and popular neighbourhood, conduct to the modern Church of St. Peter. At the period of our story this part of the city was of

much greater consequence, both in size and appearance than it is at present, and led directly to the ancient Basilica of St. Peter, which stood on the same site as that now occupied by the modern edifice.

The events about to be narrated, occur entirely in the parts of the city just described. From the Pincian Hill, across the Campus Martius, over the Pons Elius, and on to the Basilica of St. Peter, the reader may be often invited to accompany us, but he will be spared all necessity of penetrating familiar ruins, or mourning over the sepulchres of departed patriots.

Ere, however, we revert to former actors, or proceed to new characters, it will be requisite to people the streets that we here attempt to rebuild. By this process, it is hoped that the reader will gain that familiarity with the manners and customs of the Romans of the fifth century, on which the influence of this story mainly depends, and which we despair of being able to instil by a philosophical disquisition on the features of the age. A few pages of illustration will serve our purpose better, perhaps, than volumes of historical description. There is no more unerring index to the character of a people, than the streets of their cities.

It is near evening. In the widest part of the Campus Martius crowds of people are assembled before the gates of a palace. They are congregated to receive several baskets of provisions, distributed with ostentatious charity by the owner of the mansion. The incessant clamour and agitation of the impatient multi-

tude, form a strange contrast to the stately serenity of the natural and artificial objects by which they are inclosed on all sides.

The space they occupy is oblong in shape and of great extent in size. Part of it is formed by a turf walk shaded with trees, part by the paved approaches to the Palace and the Public Baths which stand in its immediate neighbourhood. These two edifices are remarkable by their magnificent outward adornments of statues, and the elegance and number of the flights of steps, by which they are respectively entered. With the inferior buildings, the market-places and the gardens attached to them, they are sufficiently extensive to form the boundary of one side of the immediate view. The appearance of monotony which might at other times be remarked in the vastness and regularity of their white fronts, is, at this moment, agreeably broken by several gaily-coloured awnings, stretched over their doors and balconies. The sun is now shining on them with overpowering brightness; the metallic ornaments on their windows glitter like gems of fire; even the trees which form their groves, partake of the universal flow of light, and fail like the objects around them to offer to the weary eye either refreshment or repose.

Towards the north, the Mausoleum of Augustus, towering proudly up into the brilliant sky, at once attracts the attention. From its position, parts of this noble building are already in shade. Not a human being is visible on any part of its mighty galleries —

it stands solitary and sublime, an impressive embodiment of the emotions which it was raised to represent.

On the side opposite the palace and the baths is the turf walk already mentioned. Trees, thickly planted and interlaced by vines, cast a luxurious shade over this spot. In their interstices, viewed from a distance, appear glimpses of gay dresses, groups of figures in repose, stands loaded with fruit and flowers, and innumerable white marble statues of fawns and wood-nymphs. From this delicious retreat the rippling of fountains is to be heard, occasionally interrupted by the rustling of leaves, or the plaintive cadences of the Roman flute.

Southward, two Pagan temples stand in lonely grandeur among a host of monuments and trophies. The symmetry of their first construction still remains unimpaired, their white marble pillars shine in the sunlight brightly as of old, yet they now present to the eye an aspect of strange desolation, of unnatural mysterious gloom. Although the laws forbid the worship for which they were built, the hand of reform has as yet not ventured to doom them to ruin, or adapt them to Christian purposes. None venture to tread their once crowded colonnades. No priest appears to give the oracles from their doors — no sacrifices reek upon their naked altars. Under their roofs, visited only by the light that steals through their narrow entrances, stand unnoticed, unworshipped, unmoved, the mighty idols of old Rome. Human emotion, which made them

Omnipotence once, has left them but stone now. The "Star in the East" has already dimmed the fearful halo which the devotion of bloodshed once wreathed round their forms. Forsaken and alone, they stand but as the gloomy monuments of the greatest delusion ever organised by the ingenuity of man.

We have now, so to express it, exhibited the frame surrounding the moving picture, which we shall next attempt to present to the reader by mixing with the multitude before the Palace gates.

This assembly resolved itself into three divisions: that collected before the palace steps, that loitering about the public baths, and that reposing in the shade of the groves. The first was of the most consequence in numbers, and of the greatest variety in appearance. Composed of rogues of the worst order from every quarter of the world, it might be said to present, in its general aspect of numerical importance, the very sublime of degradation. Confident in their rude union of common avidity, these worthy citizens vented their insolence on all objects, and in every direction, with a careless impartiality which would have shamed the most victorious efforts of modern mobs. The hubbub of voices was perfectly fearful. The coarse execrations of drunken Gauls, the licentious witticisms of effeminate Greeks, the noisy satisfaction of native Romans, the clamorous indignation of irritable Jews; all sounded together in one incessant chorus of discordant noises. Nor were the senses of sight and smell more agreeably assailed than the faculty of hearing, by this

anomalous congregation. Immodest youth and irreverent age; woman savage, man cowardly; the swarthy Ethiopian beslabbered with stinking oil; the stolid Briton begrimed with dirt; these and a hundred other varying combinations, to be imagined rather than expressed, met the attention in every direction. To describe the odours exhaled by the heat, from this seething mixture of many pollutions, would be to force the reader to close the book; we prefer to return to the distribution which was the cause of this degrading tumult, and which consisted of small baskets of roasted meat packed with common fruits and vegetables, and handed, or rather flung down to the mob by the servants of the nobleman who gave the feast. The people revelled in the abundance thus presented to them. They threw themselves upon it like wild beasts; they devoured it like hogs, or bore it off like plunderers; while, secure in the eminence on which they were placed, the purveyors of this public banquet expressed their contempt for its noisy recipients, by holding their noses, stopping their ears, turning their backs, and other pantomimic demonstrations of lofty and excessive disgust. These actions did not escape the attention of those members of the assembly who, having eaten their fill, were at leisure to make use of their tongues; and who showered an incessant storm of abuse on the heads of their benefactor's retainers.

"See those fellows!" cried one; "they are the waiters at our feast, and they mock us to our faces! Down with the filthy kitchen thieves!"

"Excellently well said, Davus! — but who is to approach them? They stink at this distance!"

"The rotten bodied knaves have the noses of dogs and the carcasses of goats."

Then came a chorus of voices — "Down with them! Down with them!" In the midst of which an indignant freedman advanced to rebuke the mob, receiving, as the reward of his temerity, a shower of missiles and a volley of curses; after which he was thus addressed by a huge greasy butcher, hoisted on his companions' shoulders.

"By the soul of the Emperor, could I get near you — you rogue! I would quarter you with my fingers alone! — A grinning scoundrel that jeers at others! A filthy flatterer that dirties the very ground he walks on. By the blood of the martyrs, should I fling the sweepings of the slaughter-house at him, he knows not where to get himself dried!"

"Thou rag of a man," roared a neighbour of the indignant butcher's, "dost thou frown upon the guests of thy master, the very scrapings of whose skin are worth more than thy whole carcase! It is easier to make a drinking vessel of the skull of a flea, than to make an honest man of such a villainous night-walker as thou art!"

"Health and prosperity to our noble entertainer!" shouted one section of the grateful crowd as the last speaker paused for breath.

"Death to all knaves of parasites!" chimed in another.

“Honour to the citizens of Rome!” roared a third party with modest enthusiasm.

“Give that freedman our bones to pick!” screamed an urchin from the outskirts of the crowd.

This ingenious piece of advice was immediately followed: and the populace gave vent to a shout of triumph as the unfortunate freedman scared by a new volley of missiles, retreated with ignominious expedition to the shelter of his patron's halls.

In the slight and purified specimen of the “table talk” of a Roman mob, which we have here ventured to exhibit, the reader will perceive that extraordinary mixture of servility and insolence which characterised not only the conversation, but the actions of the lower orders of society, at the period of which we write. Oppressed and degraded on the one hand, to a point of misery scarcely conceivable to the public of the present day; the poorer classes in Rome were, on the other, invested with such a degree of moral license, and permitted such an extent of political privilege, as flattered their vanity into blinding their sense of indignation. Slaves in their season of servitude, masters in their hours of recreation, they presented as a class, one of the most amazing social anomalies ever existing in any nation; and formed, in their dangerous and artificial position, one of the most important of the internal causes of the downfall of Rome.

The steps of the public baths were almost as crowded as the space before the neighbouring building. Incessant streams of people, either entering or depart-

ing, poured over the broad flagstones of its marble colonnades. This concourse, although composed in some parts of the same class of people as that assembled before the palace, presented a certain appearance of respectability. Here and there — chequering the dusky monotony of masses of dirty tunics — might be discerned the refreshing vision of a clean robe, or the grateful indication of a handsome person. Little groups, removed as far as possible from the neighbourhood of the noisy plebeians, were scattered about, either engaged in animated conversation, or listlessly succumbing to the lassitude induced by a recent bath. An instant's attention to the subject of discourse among the more active of these individuals, will aid us in pursuing our social revelations.

The loudest voice among the speakers at this particular moment, proceeded from a tall thin sinister-looking man, who was haranguing a little group of listeners with great vehemence and fluency.

“I tell you, Socius,” said he, turning suddenly upon one of his companions, “that unless new slave-laws are made, my calling is at an end. My patron's estate requires incessant supplies of these wretches. I do my best to satisfy the demand, and the only result of my labour is, that the miscreants either endanger my life, or fly with impunity to join the gangs of robbers infesting our woods.”

“Truly I am sorry for you, but what alteration would you have made in the slave-laws?”

“I would empower bailiffs to slay upon the spot

all slaves whom they thought disorderly, as an example to the rest!"

"What would such a permission avail you? These creatures are necessary, and such a law would exterminate them in a few months. Can you not break their spirit with labour, bind their strength with chains, and vanquish their obstinacy with dungeons?"

"All this I have done, but they die under the discipline, or escape from their prisons. I have now three hundred slaves on my patron's estates. Against those born on our lands I have little to urge. Many of them, it is true, begin the day with weeping and end it with death; but for the most part, thanks to their diurnal allowance of stripes, they are tolerably submissive. It is with the wretches that I have been obliged to purchase from prisoners of war and the people of revolted towns, that I am so dissatisfied. Punishments have no effect on them, they are incessantly indolent, sulky, desperate. It was but the other day that ten of them poisoned themselves while at work in the fields, and fifty more after setting fire to a farm-house while my back was turned, escaped to join a gang of their companions, who are now robbers in the woods. These fellows, however, are the last of the troop who will perpetrate such offences. With the concurrence of my patron, I have adopted a plan that will henceforth tame them efficiently!"

"Are you at liberty to communicate it?"

"By the keys of St. Peter, I wish I could see it practised on every estate in the land! It is this: —

Near a sulphur lake at some distance from my farmhouse, is a tract of marshy ground, overspread here and there by the ruins of an ancient slaughter-house. I propose to dig in this place several subterranean caverns, each of which shall be capable of holding twenty men. Here my mutinous slaves shall sleep after their day's labour. The entrances shall be closed until morning with a large stone, on which I will have engraven this inscription:—"These are the dormitories invented by Gordian, bailiff of Saturninus, a nobleman, for the reception of refractory slaves."

"Your plan is ingenious; but I suspect your slaves (so insensible to hardships are the brutal herd) will sleep as unconcernedly in their new dormitories as in their old."

"Sleep! It will be a most original species of repose that they will taste there! The stench of the sulphur lake will breathe Sabian odours for them over a couch of mud! Their anointing oil will be the slime of attendant reptiles! Their liquid perfumes will be the stagnant ooze from their chamber roof! Their music will be the croaking of frogs and the humming of gnats; and as for their adornments, why they will be decked forth with head-garlands of twining worms, and moveable brooches of cock-chafers and toads! Tell me now, most sagacious Socius, do you still think that amidst such luxuries as these my slaves will sleep?"

"No; they will die."

"You are again wrong. They will curse and rave perhaps, but that is of no consequence. They will

work the longer above ground to shorten the term of their repose beneath. They will wake at an instant's notice, and come forth at a moment's signal. I have no fear of their dying!"

"Do you leave Rome soon?"

"I go this evening, taking with me such a supply of trustworthy assistants as will enable me to execute my plan without delay. Farewell, Socius!"

"Most ingenious of bailiffs, I bid you farewell!"

As the worthy Gordian stalked off, big with the dignity of his new projects, the gestures and tones of a man who formed one of a little group collected in a remote part of the portico he was about to quit attracted his attention. Curiosity formed as conspicuous an ingredient in this man's character as cruelty. He stole behind the base of a neighbouring pillar; and as the frequent repetition of the word "Goths" struck his ear (the report of that nation's impending invasion having by this time reached Rome), he carefully disposed himself to listen with the most implicit attention to the speaker's voice.

"Goths!" cried the man in the stern, concentrated accents of despair. "Is there one among us to whom this report of their advance upon Rome does not speak of hope rather than of dread? Have we a chance of rising from the degradation forced on us by our superiors until this den of heartless triflers and shameless cowards is swept from the very earth that it pollutes!"

"Your sentiments on the evils of our condition are

undoubtedly most just," observed a fat, pompous man, to whom the preceding remarks had been addressed, "but I cannot desire the reform you so ardently hope for. Think of the degradation of being conquered by barbarians!"

"I am the exile of my country's privileges. What interest have I in upholding her honour? — if honour she really has!" replied the first speaker.

"Nay! Your expressions are too severe. You are too discontented to be just."

"Am I? Hear me for a moment, and you will change your opinion. You see me now by my bearing and appearance superior to yonder plebeian herd. You doubtless think that I live at my ease in the world, that I can feel no anxiety for the future about my bodily necessities. What would you say were I to tell you that, if I want another meal, a lodging for to-night, a fresh robe for to-morrow, I must rob or flatter some great man to gain them. Yet so it is. I am hopeless, friendless, destitute. In the whole of the empire there is not an honest calling in which I can take refuge. I must become a pander or a parasite — a hired tyrant over slaves, or a chartered groveller beneath nobles — if I would not starve miserably in the streets, or rob openly in the woods! This is what I am. Now listen to what I was. I was born free. I inherited from my father a farm which he had successfully defended from the encroachments of the rich, at the expense of his comfort, his health, and his life. When I succeeded to his lands, I determined to pro-

fect them in *my* time as studiously as he had defended them in *his*. I worked unintermittingly: I enlarged my house, I improved my fields, I increased my flocks. One after another, I despised the threats and defeated the wiles of my noble neighbours, who desired possession of my estate to swell their own territorial grandeur. In process of time I married and had a child. I believed that I was picked out from my race as a fortunate man — when one night I was attacked by robbers: slaves made desperate by the cruelty of their wealthy masters. They ravaged my corn-fields, they deprived me of my flocks. When I demanded redress, I was told to sell my lands to those who could defend them, to those rich nobles whose tyranny had organised the band of wretches who had spoiled me of my possessions, and to whose fraud-gotten treasures the government were well pleased to grant that protection which they had denied to my honest hoards. In my pride I determined that I would still be independent. I planted new crops. With the little remnant of my money I hired fresh servants and bought more flocks. I had just recovered from my first disaster, when I became the victim of a second. I was again attacked. This time we had arms, and we attempted to defend ourselves. My wife was slain before my eyes; my house was burnt to the ground; I myself only escaped, mutilated with wounds; my child soon afterwards pined and died. I had no wife, no offspring, no house, no money. My fields still stretched round me, but I had none to cultivate them. My walls still tottered at my

feet, but I had none to rear them again, none to inhabit them if they were reared. My father's lands were now become a wilderness to me. I was too proud to sell them to my rich neighbour; I preferred to leave them before I saw them the prey of a tyrant, whose rank had triumphed over my industry, and who is now able to boast that he can travel over ten leagues of senatorial property, untainted by the propinquity of a husbandman's farm. Houseless, homeless, friendless, I have come to Rome alone in my affliction, helpless in my degradation! Do you wonder now that I am careless about the honour of my country? I would have served her with my life and my possessions, when she was worthy of my service; but she has cast me off, and I care not who conquers her. I say to the Goths — with thousands who suffer the same tribulation that I now undergo — 'Enter our gates! Level our palaces to the ground! Confound, if you will, in one common slaughter, us that are victims with those that are tyrants! Your invasion will bring new lords to the land. They cannot crush it more — they may oppress it less. Our posterity may gain their rights by the sacrifice of lives that our country has made worthless. Romans though we are, we are ready to suffer and submit!'"

He stopped; for by this time he had lashed himself into fury. His eyes glared, his cheeks flushed, his voice rose. Could he then have seen the faintest vision of the destiny that future ages had in store for the posterity of the race that now suffered throughout

civilised Europe, like him — could he have imagined how, in after years, the “middle class,” despised in his day, was to rise to privilege and power; to hold in its just hands the balance of the prosperity of nations; to crush oppression and regulate rule; to soar in its mighty flight above thrones and principalities, and ranks and riches, apparently obedient, but really commanding — could he but have foreboded this, what a light must have burst upon his gloom, what a hope must have soothed him in his despair!

To what further extremities his anger might have carried him, to what proceedings the indignant Gordian, who still listened from his concealment, might have had recourse, it is difficult to say; for the complaints of the ill-fated landholder and the cogitations of the authoritative bailiff were alike suddenly suspended by an uproar raging at this moment round a carriage which had just emerged from the palace we have elsewhere described.

This vehicle looked one mass of silver. Embroidered silk curtains fluttered all around it, gold ornaments studded its polished sides, and it held no less a person than the nobleman who had feasted the people with baskets of meat. This fact had become known to the rabble before the palace gates. Such an opportunity of showing their exultation in their bondage, their real servility in their imaginary independence, was not to be lost; and accordingly they let loose such a torrent of clamorous gratitude on their entertainer's appearance, that a stranger in Rome would have

thought the city in revolt. They leapt, they ran, they danced round the prancing horses, they flung their empty baskets into the air, and patted approvingly their "fair round bellies." From every side, as the carriage moved on, they gained fresh recruits, and acquired new importance. The timid fled before them, the noisy shouted with them, the bold plunged into their ranks; and the constant burden of their rejoicing chorus was — "Health to the noble Pomponius! Prosperity to the senators of Rome, who feast us with their food, and give us the freedom of their theatres! Glory to Pomponius! Glory to the senators!"

Fate seemed on this day to take pleasure in pampering the insatiable curiosity of Gordian, the bailiff. The cries of the multitude had scarcely died away in the distance, as they followed the departing carriage, when the voices of two men, pitched to a low, confidential tone, reached his ear from the opposite side of the pillar. He peeped cautiously round, and saw that they were priests.

"What an eternal jester is that Pomponius!" said one voice. "He is going to receive absolution, and he journeys in his chariot of state, as if he were preparing to celebrate his triumph, instead of to confess his sins!"

"Has he committed then a fresh imprudence?"

"Alas, yes! For a senator he is dreadfully wanting in caution! A few days since in a fit of passion, he flung a drinking-cup at one of his female slaves. The girl died on the spot, and her brother, who is

also in his service, threatened immediate vengeance. To prevent disagreeable consequences to his body, Pomponius has sent the fellow to his estates in Egypt; and now, from the same precaution for the welfare of his soul, he goes to demand absolution from our holy and beneficent Church."

"I am afraid these incessant absolutions granted to men who are too careless even to make a show of repentance for their crimes, will prejudice us with the people at large."

"Of what consequence are the sentiments of the people while we have their rulers on our side! Absolution is the sorcery that binds these libertines of Rome to our will. *We* know what converted Constantine — politic flattery and ready absolution; the people will tell you it was the sign of the Cross."

"It is true this Pomponius is rich, and may increase our revenues, but still I fear the indignation of the people."

"Fear nothing: think how long their old institutions imposed on them, and then doubt, if you can, that we may shape them to our wishes as we will. Any deceptions will be successful with a mob, if the instrument employed to forward them be a religion."

The voices ceased. Gordian, who still cherished a vague intention of denouncing the fugitive landholder to the senatorial authorities, employed the liberty afforded to his attention by the silence of the priests in turning to look after his intended victim.

To his surprise he saw that the man had left the auditors to whom he had before addressed himself, and was engaged in earnest conversation, in another part of the portico, with an individual who seemed to have recently joined him, and whose appearance was so remarkable that the bailiff had moved a few steps forward to gain a nearer view of him, when he was once more arrested by the voices of the priests.

Irresolute for an instant to which party to devote his unscrupulous attention, he returned mechanically to his old position. Ere long, however, his anxiety to hear the mysterious communications proceeding between the landholder and his friend overbalanced his delight in penetrating the theological secrets of the priests. He turned once more, but to his astonishment the objects of his curiosity had disappeared. He stepped to the outside of the portico and looked for them in every direction, but they were nowhere to be seen. Peevish and disappointed, he returned as a last resource to the pillar where he had left the priests, but the time consumed in his investigations after one party had been fatal to his reunion with the other. The churchmen were gone.

Sufficiently punished for his curiosity by his disappointment, the bailiff walked doggedly off towards the Pincian Hill. Had he turned in the contrary direction, towards the Basilica of St. Peter, he would have found himself once more in the neighbourhood of the landholder and his remarkable friend, and would have gained that acquaintance with the subjects of

their conversation, which we intend that the reader shall acquire in the course of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

The Church.

IN the year 324, on the locality assigned by rumour to the martyrdom of St. Peter, and over the ruins of the Circus of Nero, Constantine erected the Church called the Basilica of St. Peter.

For twelve centuries, this building, raised by a man infamous for his murders and his tyrannies, stood uninjured amid the shocks which during that long period devastated the rest of the city. After that time it was removed, tottering to its base from its own reverend and illustrious age, by Pope Julius II., to make way for the foundations of the modern church.

It is towards this structure of twelve hundred years duration, erected by hands stained with blood, and yet preserved as a star of peace in the midst of stormy centuries of war, that we would direct the reader's attention. What art has done for the modern church, time has effected for the ancient. If the one is majestic to the eye by its grandeur, the other is hallowed to the memory by its age.

As this church by its rise commemorated the triumphant establishment of Christianity as the religion of Rome, so in its progress it reflected every change wrought in the spirit of the new worship by the ambition, the prodigality, or the frivolity of the priests. At first, it stood awful and imposing, beautiful in all its parts as

the religion for whose glory it was built. Vast porphyry colonnades decorated its approaches, and surrounded a fountain whose waters issued from the representation of a gigantic pine tree in bronze. Its double rows of aisles, were each supported by forty-eight columns of precious marble. Its flat ceiling was adorned with beams of gilt metal, rescued from the pollution of heathen temples. Its walls were decorated with large paintings of religious subjects, and its tribunal was studded with elegant mosaics. Thus it rose, simple and yet sublime, awful and yet alluring; in this its beginning, a type of the dawn of the worship which it was elevated to represent. But when flushed with success, the priests seized on Christianity as their path to politics and their introduction to power, the aspect of the church gradually began to change. As, slowly and insensibly, ambitious man heaped the garbage of his mysteries, his doctrines, and his disputes, about the pristine purity of the structure given him by God, so one by one, gaudy adornments and meretricious alterations arose to sully the majestic Basilica, until the threatening and reproving apparition of the pagan Julian, when both Church and churchmen received in their corrupt progress a sudden and impressive check.

The short period of the revival of idolatry once passed over, the priests, unmoved by the warning they had received, returned with renewed vigour to confuse that which both in their Gospel and their Church had been once simple. Day by day they put forth fresh

treatises, aroused fierce controversies, subsided into new sects; and, day by day, they altered more and more the once noble aspect of the ancient Basilica. They hung their nauseous relics on its mighty walls, they stuck their tiny tapers about its glorious pillars, they wreathed their tawdry fringes around its massive altars. Here they polished, there they embroidered. Wherever there was a window, they curtained it with gaudy cloths; wherever there was a statue, they bedizened it with artificial flowers; wherever there was a solemn recess, they outraged its religious gloom with intruding light; until (arriving at the period we write of) they succeeded so completely in changing the aspect of the building, that it looked, within, more like a vast Pagan toy-shop than a Christian church. Here and there, it is true, a pillar or an altar rose unencumbered as of old, appearing as much at variance with the frippery that surrounded it, as a text of Scripture quoted in a sermon of the time. But as regarded the general aspect of the Basilica, the decent glories of its earlier days seemed irrevocably departed and destroyed.

After what has been said of the edifice, the reader will have little difficulty in imagining that the square in which it stood lost whatever elevation of character it might once have possessed, with even greater rapidity than the church itself. If the cathedral now looked like an immense toy-shop, assuredly its attendant colonnades had the appearance of the booths of an enormous fair.

The day, whose decline we have hinted at in the preceding Chapter, was fast verging towards its close, as the inhabitants of the streets on the western bank of the Tiber prepared to join the crowds that they beheld passing by their windows, in the direction of the Basilica of St. Peter. The cause of this sudden confluence of the popular current in one common direction, was made sufficiently apparent to all inquirers who happened to be near a church or a public building, by the appearance in such situations of a large sheet of vellum elaborately illuminated, raised on a high pole, and guarded from contact with the inquisitive rabble by two armed soldiers. The announcements set forth in these strange placards were all of the same nature and directed to the same end. In each of them the Bishop of Rome informed his "pious and honourable brethren," the inhabitants of the city, that as the next day was the anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. Luke, the vigil would necessarily be held on that evening in the Basilica of St. Peter; and that in consideration of the importance of the occasion, there would be exhibited, before the commencement of the ceremony, those precious relics connected with the death of the saint, which had become the inestimable inheritance of the Church; and which consisted of a branch of the olive tree to which St. Luke was hung, a piece of the noose — including the knot — which had been passed round his neck, and a picture of the Apotheosis of the Virgin painted by his own hand. After some sentences expressive of lamentation for the

sufferings of the saint, which nobody read and which it is unnecessary to reproduce here, the proclamation went on to state that a sermon would be preached in the course of the vigil, and that at a later hour the great chandelier, containing two thousand four hundred lamps, would be lit to illuminate the church. Finally, the worthy bishop called upon all members of his flock, in consideration of the solemnity of the day, to abstain from sensual pleasures, in order that they might the more piously and worthily contemplate the sacred objects submitted to their view, and digest the spiritual nourishment to be offered to their understandings.

From the specimen we have already given of the character of the populace of Rome, it will perhaps be unnecessary to say that the great attractions presented by this theological bill of fare were the relics and the chandelier. Pulpit eloquence and vigil solemnities alone, must have long exhibited their more sober allurements, before they could have drawn into the streets a fiftieth part of the immense crowd that now hurried towards the desecrated Basilica. Indeed, so vast was the assemblage soon congregated, that the advanced ranks of sight-seers had already filled the church to overflowing, before those in the rear had come within view of the colonnades.

However dissatisfied the unsuccessful portion of the citizens might feel at their exclusion from the church, they found a powerful counter-attraction in the amusements going forward in the Place, the occupants of

which seemed thoroughly regardless of the bishop's admonitions upon the sobriety of behaviour due to the solemnity of the day. As if in utter defiance of the decency and order recommended by the clergy, popular exhibitions of all sorts were set up on the broad flagstones of the great space before the church. Street dancing-girls exercised at every available spot those "gliding gyrations," so eloquently condemned by the worthy Ammianus Marcellinus of orderly and historical memory. Booths crammed with relics of doubtful authenticity; baskets filled with neat manuscript abstracts of furiously controversial pamphlets; Pagan images regenerated into portraits of saints; pictorial representations of Arians writhing in damnation, and martyrs basking in haloes of celestial light, tempted, in every direction, the more pious among the spectators. Cooks perambulated with their shops on their backs, rival slave-merchants shouted petitions for patronage; wine-sellers taught Bacchanalian philosophy from the tops of their casks; poets recited compositions for sale; sophisters held arguments destined to convert the wavering, and perplex the ignorant. Incessant motion and incessant noise seemed to be the sole compensations sought by the multitude for the disappointment of exclusion from the church. If a stranger, after reading the proclamation of the day, had preceded to the Basilica, to feast his eyes on the contemplation of the illustrious aggregate of humanity, entitled by the bishop "his pious and honourable brethren," he must — on mixing at this moment with the assemblage —

have either doubted the truth of the episcopal appellation, or have given the citizens credit for that refinement of intrinsic worth which is of too elevated a nature to influence the character of the outward man.

At the time when the sun set, nothing could be more picturesque than the distant view of this joyous scene. The deep red rays of the departing luminary cast their radiance, partly from behind the church, over the vast multitude in the Place. Brightly and rapidly the rich light roved over the waters that leaped towards it from the fountain in all the loveliness of natural and evanescent form. Bathed in that brilliant glow, the smooth porphyry colonnades reflected, chameleon like, ethereal and varying hues; the white marble statues became suffused in a delicate rose-colour, and the sober-tinted trees gleamed in the innermost of their leafy depths as if steeped in the exhalations of a golden mist. While, contrasting strangely with the wondrous radiance around them, the huge bronze pine-tree in the middle of the Place, and the wide front of the Basilica, rose up in gloomy shadow, indefinite and exaggerated, lowering like evil spirits over the joyous beauty of the rest of the scene, and casting their great depths of shade into the midst of the light whose dominion they despised. Beheld from a distance, this wild combination of vivid brightness and solemn gloom; these buildings, at one place darkened till they looked gigantic, at another lightened till they appeared ethereal; these crowded groups, seeming one great moving mass

gleaming at this point in radiant light, obscured at that in thick shadow, made up a whole so incongruous and yet so beautiful, so grotesque and yet so sublime, that the scene looked for the moment, more like some inhabited meteor, half eclipsed by its propinquity to earth, than a mortal and material prospect.

The beauties of this atmospheric effect were of far too serious and sublime a nature to interest the multitude in the Place. Out of the whole assemblage, but two men watched that glorious sunset with even an appearance of the admiration and attention which it deserved. One was the landholder whose wrongs were related in the preceding chapter — the other his remarkable friend.

These two men formed a singular contrast to each other, both in demeanour and appearance, as they gazed forth upon the crimson heaven. The landholder was an under-sized, restless-looking man, whose features, naturally sharp, were now distorted by a fixed expression of misery and discontent. His quick, penetrating glance wandered incessantly from place to place, perceiving all things, but resting on none. In his attention to the scene before him, he appeared to have been led more by the influence of example than by his own spontaneous feelings; for ever and anon he looked impatiently round upon his friend as if expecting him to speak — but no word or movement escaped his thoughtful companion. Occupied exclusively in his own contemplations, he appeared wholly insensible to any ordinary outward appeal.

In age and appearance this individual was in the decline of life; for he had numbered sixty years, his hair was completely gray, and his face was covered with deep wrinkles. Yet, in spite of these disadvantages, he was in the highest sense of the word a handsome man. Though worn and thin, his features were still bold and regular; and there was an elevation about the habitual mournfulness of his expression, and an intelligence about his somewhat severe and earnest eyes, that bore eloquent testimony to the superiority of his intellectual powers. As he now stood gazing fixedly out into the glowing sky, his tall, meagre figure half supported upon his staff, his lips firmly compressed, his brow slightly frowning, and his attitude firm and motionless; the most superficial observer must have felt immediately that he looked on no ordinary being. The history of a life of deep thought — perhaps of long sorrow — seemed written in every lineament of his meditative countenance; and there was a natural dignity in his manner, which evidently restrained his restless companion from offering any determined interruption to the course of his reflections.

Slowly and gorgeously the sun had continued to wane in the horizon until he was now lost to view. As his last rays sunk behind the distant hills, the stranger started from his reverie and approached the landholder, pointing with his staff towards the fast-fading brightness of the western sky.

“Probus,” said he, in a low, melancholy voice, “as

I looked on that sunset, I thought on the condition of the Church."

"I see little in the Church to think of, or in the sunset to observe," replied his companion.

"How pure, how vivid," murmured the other, scarcely heeding the landholder's remark, "was the light which that sun cast upon this earth at our feet! How nobly for a time its brightness triumphed over the shadows around; and yet, in spite of the promise of that radiance, how swiftly did it fade ere long in its conflict with the gloom — how thoroughly, even now, has it departed from the earth, and withdrawn the beauty of its glory from the heaven! Already the shadows are lengthening around us, and shrouding in their darkness every object in the Place. But a short hour hence, and — should no moon arise — the gloom of night will stretch unresisted over Rome!"

"To what purpose do you tell me this?"

"Are you not reminded by what we have observed of the course of the worship which it is our privilege to profess? Does not that first beautiful light denote its pure and perfect rise; that short conflict between the radiance and the gloom, its successful preservation, by the Apostles and the Fathers; that rapid fading of the radiance, its desecration in later times; and the gloom which now surrounds us, the destruction which has encompassed it in this age we live in? — a destruction which nothing can avert but a return to that pure first faith that should now be the hope of our religion, as the moon is the hope of night!"

“How should we reform? Do people who have no liberties care about a religion? Who is to teach them?”

“I have — I will. It is the purpose of my life to restore to them the holiness of the ancient Church; to rescue them from the snares of traitors to the faith, whom men call priests. They shall learn through me that the Church knew no adornment once, but the presence of the pure; that the priest craved no finer vestment than his holiness; that the Gospel, which once taught humility and now raises dispute, was in former days the rule of faith — sufficient for all wants, powerful over all difficulties. Through *me* they shall know that in times past it was the guardian of the heart; through *me* they shall see that in times present it is the plaything of the proud; through *me* they shall fear that in times future it may become the exile of the Church! To this task I have vowed myself; to overthrow this idolatry — which, like another paganism, rises among us with its images, its relics, its jewels, and its gold — I will devote my child, my life, my energies, and my possessions. From this attempt I will never turn aside — from this determination I will never flinch. While I have a breath of life in me, I will persevere in restoring to this abandoned city the true worship of the Most High!”

He ceased abruptly. The intensity of his agitation seemed suddenly to deny to him the faculty of speech. Every muscle in the frame of that stern, melancholy man quivered at the immortal promptings of the soul within

him. There was something almost feminine in his universal susceptibility to the influence of one solitary emotion. Even the rough, desperate landholder felt awed by the enthusiasm of the being before him, and forgot his wrongs, terrible as they were — and his misery, poignant as it was — as he gazed upon his companion's face.

For some minutes neither of the men said more. Soon, however, the last speaker calmed his agitation with the facility of a man accustomed to stifle the emotions that he cannot crush, and advancing to the landholder, took him sorrowfully by the hand.

“I see, Probus, that I have amazed you,” said he; “but the Church is the only subject on which I have no discretion. In all other matters I have conquered the rashness of my early manhood; in this I have to wrestle with my hastier nature still. When I look on the mockeries that are acting around us; when I behold a priesthood deceivers, a people deluded, a religion defiled, then, I confess it, my indignation overpowers my patience, and I burn to destroy, where I ought only to hope to reform.”

“I knew you always violent of imagination; but when I last saw you, your enthusiasm was love. Your wife ——”

“Peace! She deceived me!”

“Your child ——”

“Lives with me at Rome.”

“I remember her an infant, when, fourteen years since, I was your neighbour in Gaul. On my depar-

ture from the province, you had just returned from a journey into Italy, unsuccessful in your attempts to discover there a trace either of your parents, or of that elder brother, whose absence you were wont so continually to lament. Tell me, have you, since that period, discovered the members of your ancient household? Hitherto you have been so occupied in listening to the history of my wrongs, that you have scarcely spoken of the changes in your life since we last met."

"If, Probus, I have been silent to you concerning myself, it is because for me retrospection has little that attracts. While yet it was in my power to return to those parents whom I deserted in my boyhood, I thought not of repentance; and now, that they must be but too surely lost to me, my yearning towards them is of no avail. Of my brother, from whom I parted in a moment of childish jealousy and anger, and whose pardon and love I would give up even my ambition to acquire, I have never yet discovered a trace. Atonement to those whom I injured in early life is a privilege denied to the prayers of my age. From my parents and my brother I departed unblest, and unforgiven by them I feel that I am doomed to die! My life has been careless, useless, godless, passing from rapine and violence to luxury and indolence, and leading me to the marriage which I exulted in when I last saw you, but which I now feel was unworthy, alike in its motives and its results. But blessed and thrice blessed be that last calamity of my wicked existence,

for it opened my eyes to the truth — it made a Christian of me while I was yet alive!”

“Is it thus that the Christian can view his afflictions? I would, then, that I were a Christian like you!” murmured the landholder in low, earnest tones.

“It was in those first days, Probus,” continued the other, “when I found myself deserted and dishonoured, left alone to be the guardian of my helpless child, exiled for ever from a home that I had myself forsaken, that I repented me in earnest of my misdeeds, that I sought wisdom from the book of salvation, and the conduct of life from the Fathers of the Church. It was at that time that I determined to devote my child, like Samuel of old, to the service of heaven, and myself to the reformation of our degraded worship. As I have already told you, I forsook my abode and changed my name (remember it is as ‘*Numerian*’ that you must henceforth address me), that of my former self no remains might be left, that of my former companions not one might ever discover and tempt me again. With incessant care have I shielded my daughter from the contamination of the world. As a precious jewel in a miser’s hands she has been watched and guarded in her father’s house. Her destiny is to soothe the afflicted, to watch the sick, to succour the forlorn, when I, her teacher, have restored to the land the dominion of its ancient faith, and the guidance of its faultless Gospel. We have neither of us an affection, or a hope that can bind us to the things of earth.

Our hearts look both towards heaven; our expectations are only from on high!"

"Do not set your hopes too firmly on your child. Remember how the nobles of Rome have destroyed the household I once had, and tremble for your own."

"I have no fear for my daughter; she is cared for in my absence by one who is vowed to aid me in my labours for the Church. It is now nearly a year since I first met Ulpus, and from that time forth he has devoted himself to my service and watched over my child."

"Who is this Ulpus, that you should put such faith in him?"

"He is a man of age like mine. I found him, like me, worn down by the calamities of his early life, and abandoned, as I had once been, to the delusions of the pagan gods. He was desolate, suffering, forlorn, and I had pity on him in his misery. I proved to him that the worship he still professed was banished for its iniquities from the land; that the religion which had succeeded it had become defiled by man, and that there remained but one faith for him to choose, if he would be saved — the faith of the early Church. He heard me and was converted. From that moment he has served me patiently and helped me willingly. Under the roof where I assemble the few who as yet are true believers, he is always the first to come and the last to remain. No word of anger has ever crossed his lips — no look of impatience has ever appeared in

his eyes. Though sorrowful, he is gentle; though suffering, he is industrious. I have trusted him with all I possess, and I glory in my credulity! Ulpus is incorruptible!"

"And your daughter? — is Ulpus revered by her, as he is respected by you?"

"She knows that her duty is to love whom I love, and to avoid whom I avoid. Can you imagine that a Christian virgin has any feelings disobedient to her father's wishes? Come to my house; judge with your own eyes of my daughter and my companion. You, whose misfortunes have left you no home, shall find one, if you will, with me. Come then and labour with me in my great undertaking! You will withdraw your mind from the contemplation of your woes, and merit by your devotion the favour of the Most High."

"No, Numerian, I will still be independent, even of my friends! Nor Rome, nor Italy, are abiding-places for me. I go to another land to abide among another people, until the arms of a conqueror shall have restored freedom to the brave and protection to the honest, throughout the countries of the empire."

"Probus, I implore you stay!"

"Never! My determination is taken, Numerian, farewell!"

And the landholder hurried rapidly away, as if fearful to trust his resolution any longer against the persuasions of his friend.

For a few minutes, Numerian stood motionless,

gazing wistfully in the direction taken by his companion on his departure. At first, an expression of grief and pity softened the austerity which seemed the habitual characteristic of his countenance when in repose, but soon these milder and tenderer feelings appeared to vanish from his heart as suddenly as they had arisen; his features re-assumed their customary sternness, and he muttered to himself as he mixed with the crowd struggling onwards in the direction of the Basilica — “Let him depart unregretted, he has denied himself to the service of his Maker. He should no longer be my friend.”

In this sentence lay the index to the character of the man. His existence was one vast sacrifice, one scene of intrepid self-immolation. Although, in the brief hints at the events of his life which he had communicated to his friend, he had exaggerated the extent of his errors, he had by no means done justice to the fervour of his penitence, a penitence which outstripped the usual boundaries of repentance, and only began in despair to terminate in fanaticism. His desertion of his father's house, (into the motives of which it is not our present intention to enter), and his long subsequent existence of violence and excess, indisposed his naturally strong passions to submit to the slightest restraint. In obedience to their first impulses, he contracted at a mature age, a marriage with a woman thoroughly unworthy of the ardent admiration that she had inspired. When he found himself deceived and dishonoured by her, the shock of such an affliction

thrilled through his whole being — crushed all his energies — struck him prostrate, heart and mind, at one blow. The errors of his youth, committed in his prosperity with moral impunity, reacted upon him in his adversity with an influence fatal to his future peace. His repentance was darkened by despondency; his resolutions were unbrightened by hope. He flew to religion as the suicide flies to the knife — in despair.

Leaving all remaining peculiarities in Numerian's character to be discussed at a future opportunity, we will now follow him in his passage through the crowd, to the entrance of the Basilica — continuing to designate him, here and elsewhere, by the name which he had assumed on his conversion, and by which he had insisted on being addressed during his interview with the fugitive landholder.

Although at the commencement of his progress towards the church, our enthusiast found himself placed among the hindermost of the members of the advancing throng, he soon contrived so thoroughly to outstrip his dilatory and discursive neighbours as to gain, with little delay, the steps of the sacred building. Here, in common with many others, he was compelled to stop, while those nearest the Basilica squeezed their way through its stately doors. In such a situation his remarkable figure could not fail to be noticed, and he was silently recognised by many of the bystanders — some of whom looked on him with wonder, and some with aversion. Nobody, however, approached or spoke to him. Every one felt the necessity of

shunning a man whose bold and daily exposures of the abuses of the Church placed in incessant peril his liberty, and even his life.

Among the bystanders who surrounded Numerian, there were nevertheless two who did not remain content with carelessly avoiding any communication with the intrepid and suspected Reformer. These two men belonged to the lowest order of the clergy, and appeared to be occupied in cautiously watching the actions and listening to the conversation of the individuals immediately around them. The instant they beheld Numerian, they moved so as to elude his observation, taking care at the same time to occupy such a position as enabled them to keep in view the object of their evident distrust.

“Look, Osius,” said one, “that man is here again!”

“And doubtless, with the same motives which brought him here yesterday,” replied the other. “You will see that he will again enter the church, listen to the service, retire to his little chapel near the Pincian Mount, and there, before his ragged mob of adherents, attack the doctrines which our brethren have preached, as we know he did last night, and as we suspect he will continue to do, until the authorities think proper to give the signal for his imprisonment.”

“I marvel that he should have been permitted to persist so long a time as he has in his course of contumacy towards the Church. Have we not evidence enough in his writings alone to convict him of heresy?”

The carelessness of the bishop upon such a matter as this is quite inexplicable!"

"You should consider, Numerian not being a priest, that the carelessness about our interest lies more with the senate than the bishop. What time our nobles can spare from their debaucheries, has been lately given to discussions on the conduct of the Emperor in retiring to Ravenna, and will now be dedicated to penetrating the basis of this rumour about the Goths. Besides, even were they at liberty, what care the senate about theological disputes? They only know this Numerian as a citizen of Rome, a man of some influence and possessions, and, consequently, a person of political importance as a member of the population. In addition to which, it would be no easy task for us, at the present moment, to impugn the doctrines broached by our assailant; for the fellow has a troublesome facility of supporting what he says by the Bible. Believe me, in this matter, our only way of righting ourselves will be to convict him of scandal against the highest dignitaries of the Church."

"The order that we have lately received to track his movements and listen to his discourses, leads me to believe that our superiors are of your opinion."

"Whether my convictions are correct or not, of this I feel assured — that his days of liberty are numbered. It was but a few hours ago that I saw the bishop's chamberlain's head-assistant, and he told me that he had heard, through the crevice of a door——"

"Hush! he moves; he is pressing forward to enter

the church. You can tell me what you were about to say as we follow him. Quick! let us mix with the crowd."

Ever enthusiastic in the performance of their loathsome duties, these two discreet pastors of a Christian flock followed Numerian with the most elaborate caution into the interior of the sacred building.

Although the sun still left a faint streak of red in the western sky, and the moon had as yet scarcely risen, the great chandelier of two thousand four hundred lamps, mentioned by the bishop in his address to the people, was already alight. In the days of its severe and sacred beauty, the appearance of the church would have suffered fatally by this blaze of artificial brilliancy; but now that the ancient character of the Basilica was completely changed, now that from a solemn temple it had been altered to the semblance of a luxurious palace, it gained immensely by its gaudy illumination. Not an ornament along the vast extent of its glorious nave, but glittered in vivid distinctness in the dazzling light that poured downwards from the roof. The gilded rafters, the smooth inlaid marble pillars, the rich hangings of the windows, the jewelled candlesticks on the altars, the pictures, the statues, the bronzes, the mosaics, each and all glowed with a steady and luxurious transparency, absolutely intoxicating to the eye. Not a trace of wear, not a vestige of tarnish now appeared on any object. Each portion of the nave to which the attention was directed, appeared too finely, spotlessly radiant, ever to have been touched by

mortal hands. Entranced and bewildered, the observation roamed over the surface of the brilliant scene, until wearied by the unbroken embellishment of the prospect, it wandered for repose upon the dimly-lighted aisles, and dwelt with delight upon the soft shadows that hovered about their distant pillars, and the gliding forms that peopled their dusky recesses, or loitered past their lofty walls.

At the moment when Numerian entered the Basilica, a part of the service had just concluded. The last faint echo from the voices of the choir still hung upon the incense-laden air, and the vast masses of the spectators were still grouped in their listening and various attitudes, as the devoted reformer looked forth upon the church. Even he, stern as he was, seemed for a moment subdued by the ineffable enchantment of the scene; but ere long, as if displeased with his own involuntary emotions of admiration, his brow contracted, and he sighed heavily, as (still followed by the attentive spies) he sought the comparative seclusion of the aisles.

During the interval between the divisions of the service, the congregation occupied themselves in staring at the relics, which were inclosed in a silver cabinet with crystal doors, and placed on the top of the high altar. Although it was impossible to obtain a satisfactory view of these ecclesiastical treasures, they nevertheless employed the attention of every one, until the appearance of a priest in the pulpit gave signal of

the commencement of the sermon, and admonished all those who had seats to secure them without delay.

Passing through the ranks of the auditors of the sermon, — some of whom were engaged in counting the lights in the chandelier, to be certain that the bishop had not defrauded them of one out of the two thousand four hundred lamps; others in holding whispered conversations, and opening small boxes of sweetmeats — we again conduct the reader to the outside of the church.

The assemblage here had by this time much diminished; the shadows flung over the ground by the lofty colonnades had deepened and increased; and in many of the more remote recesses of the Place hardly a human being was to be observed. At one of these extremities, where the pillars terminated in the street and the obscurity was most intense, stood a solitary old man keeping himself cautiously concealed in the darkness, and looking out anxiously upon the public way immediately before him.

He had waited but a short time when a handsome chariot preceded by a body-guard of gaily-attired slaves, stopped within a few paces of his lurking-place, and the voice of the person it contained pronounced audibly the following words: —

“No! no! Drive on — we are later than I thought. If I stay to see this illumination of the Basilica, I shall not be in time to receive my guests for to-night’s banquet. Besides, this inestimable kitten of the breed most worshipped by the ancient Egyptians has already

taken cold, and I would not for the world expose the susceptible animal any longer than is necessary to the dampness of the night-air. Drive on, good Carrio, drive on!"

The old man scarcely waited for the conclusion of this speech before he ran up to the chariot, where he was immediately confronted by two heads, one that of Vetrano the senator, the other that of a glossy black kitten adorned with a collar of rubies, and half enveloped in its master's ample robes. Before the astonished noble could articulate a word, the man whispered in hoarse, hurried accents, "I am Ulpus — dismiss your servants — I have something important to say!"

"Ha! My worthy Ulpus! You have a most unhappy faculty of delivering a message with the manner of an assassin! But I must pardon your unpleasant abruptness in consideration of your diligence. My excellent Carrio, if you value my approbation, remove your companions and yourself out of hearing!"

The freedman yielded instant obedience to his master's mandate. The following conversation then took place, the strange man opening it thus: —

"You remember your promise?"

"I do."

"Upon your honour, as a nobleman and a senator, you are prepared to abide by it whenever it is necessary?"

"I am."

"Then at the dawn of morning meet me at the private gate of your palace garden, and I will conduct you to Antonina's bed-chamber."

"The time will suit me. But why at the dawn of morning?"

"Because the Christian dotard will keep a vigil until midnight, which the girl will most probably attend. I wished to tell you this at your palace, but I heard there, that you had gone to Aricia, and would return by way of the Basilica. So I posted myself to intercept you thus."

"Industrious Ulpus!"

"Remember your promise!"

Vetranio leaned forward to reply, but Ulpus was gone.

As the senator again commanded his equipage to move on, he looked anxiously around him, as if once more expecting to see his strange adherent still lurking near the chariot. He only perceived, however, a man whom he did not know, followed by two others, walking rapidly past him. They were Numerian and the spies.

"At last, my projects are approaching consummation," exclaimed Vetranio to himself, as he and his kitten rolled off in the chariot. "It is well that I thought of securing possession of Julia's villa to-day, for I shall now, assuredly, want to use it to-morrow. Jupiter! What a mass of dangers, contradictions, and mysteries, encompass this affair! When I think that I, who prided myself on my philosophy, have quitted

Ravenna; borrowed a private villa; leagued myself with an uncultivated plebeian; and all for the sake of a girl, who has already deceived my expectations by gaining me as a music-master without admitting me as a lover, I am positively astonished at my own weakness! Still it must be owned that the complexion my adventure has lately assumed, renders it of some interest in itself. The mere pleasure of penetrating the secrets of this Numerian's household, is by no means the least among the numerous attractions of my design. How has he gained his influence over the girl? Why does he keep her in such strict seclusion? Who is this old half-frantic, unceremonious man-monster, calling himself Ulpus; refusing all reward for his villainy; raving about a return to the old religion of the gods; and exulting in the promise he has extorted from me, as a good pagan, to support the first restoration of the ancient worship that may be attempted in Rome? Where does he come from? Why does he outwardly profess himself a Christian? What sent him into Numerian's service? By the girdle of Venus! Everything connected with the girl, is as incomprehensible as herself! But patience — patience! A few hours more, and these mysteries will be revealed. In the meantime, let me think of my banquet, and of its presiding deity, the Nightingale Sauce!"

CHAPTER V.

Antonina.

Who that has been at Rome does not remember with delight, the attractions of the Pincian Hill? Who, after toiling through the wonders of the dark, melancholy city, has not been revived by a visit to its shady walks, and by breathing its fragrant breezes? Amid the solemn mournfulness that reigns over declining Rome, this delightful elevation rises light, airy, and inviting, at once a refreshment to the body and a solace to the spirit. From its smooth summit, the city is seen in its utmost majesty, and the surrounding country in its brightest aspect. The crimes and miseries of Rome seem deterred from approaching its favoured soil; it impresses the mind as a place set apart by common consent for the presence of the innocent and the joyful — as a scene that rest and recreation keep sacred from the intrusion of tumult and toil.

Its appearance in modern days is the picture of its character for ages past. Successive wars might dull its beauties for a time, but peace invariably restored them in all their pristine loveliness. The old Romans called it "The Mount of Gardens." Throughout the disasters of the Empire and the convulsions of the Middle Ages, it continued to merit its ancient appellation, and a "Mount of Gardens" it still triumphantly remains to the present day.

At the commencement of the fifth century, the magnificence of the Pincian Hill was at its zenith.

Were it consistent with the conduct of our story, to dwell upon the glories of its palaces and its groves, its temples and its theatres, such a glowing prospect of artificial splendour, aided by natural beauty, might be spread before the reader as would tax his credulity, while it excited his astonishment. This task, however, it is here unnecessary to attempt. It is not for the wonders of ancient luxury and taste, but for the abode of the zealous and religious Numerian, that we find it now requisite to arouse interest and engage attention.

At the back of the Flaminian extremity of the Pincian Hill, and immediately overlooking the city wall, stood, at the period of which we write, a small but elegantly built house, surrounded by a little garden of its own, and protected at the back by the lofty groves and outbuildings of the palace of Vetricio the senator. This abode had been at one time a sort of summer house belonging to the former proprietor of a neighbouring mansion.

Profligate necessities had obliged the owner to part with this portion of his possessions, which was purchased by a merchant well known to Numerian, who received it as a legacy at his friend's death. Disgusted as soon as his reforming projects took possession of his mind, at the bare idea of propinquity to the ennobled libertines of Rome, the austere Christian determined to abandon his inheritance, and to sell it to another; but at the repeated entreaties of his daughter, he at length consented to change his purpose, and sacrifice his antipathy to his luxurious neighbours to his child's youth-

ful attachment to the beauties of Nature, as displayed in his legacy on the Pincian Mount. In this instance only, did the natural affection of the father prevail over the acquired severity of the reformer. Here he condescended for the first and the last time, to the sweet trivialities of youth. Here, indulgent in spite of himself, he fixed his little household, and permitted to his daughter her sole recreations of tending the flowers in the garden, and luxuriating in the loveliness of the distant view.

* * * *

The night has advanced an hour since the occurrences mentioned in the preceding chapter. The clear and brilliant moonlight of Italy now pervades every district of the glorious city, and bathes in its pure effulgence the groves and palaces on the Pincian Mount. From the garden of Numerian the irregular buildings of the great suburbs of Rome, the rich, undulating country beyond, and the long ranges of mountains in the distance, are now all visible in the soft and luxurious light. Near the spot which commands this view, not a living creature is to be seen on a first examination; but on a more industrious and patient observation, you are subsequently able to detect at one of the windows of Numerian's house, half hidden by a curtain, the figure of a young girl.

Soon this solitary form approaches nearer to the eye: the moonbeams that have hitherto shone only upon the window now illuminate other objects. First, they display a small, white arm; then a light, simple

robe; then a fair, graceful neck; and finally a bright, youthful, innocent face, directed stedfastly towards the wide moon-brightened prospect of the distant mountains.

For some time the girl remains in contemplation at her window. Then she leaves her post, and almost immediately reappears at a door leading into the garden. Her figure, as she advances towards the lawn before her, is light and small — a natural grace and propriety appear in her movements — she holds pressed to her bosom and half concealed by her robe, a gilt lute. When she reaches a turf bank commanding the same view as the window, she arranges her instrument upon her knee, and with something of restraint in her manner gently touches the chords. Then, as if alarmed at the sound she has produced, she glances anxiously around her, apparently fearful of being overheard. Her large, dark, lustrous eyes have in them an expression of apprehension; her delicate lips are half parted; a sudden flush rises in her soft, olive complexion, as she examines every corner of the garden. Having completed her survey without discovering any cause for the suspicions she seems to entertain, she again employs herself over her instrument. Once more she strikes the chords, and now with a bolder hand. The notes she produces resolve themselves into a wild, plaintive, irregular melody, alternately rising and sinking, as if swayed by the fickle influence of a summer wind. These sounds are soon harmoniously augmented by the young minstrel's voice, which is calm, still, and mellow, and

adapts itself with exquisite ingenuity to every arbitrary variation in the tone of the accompaniment. The song that she has chosen is one of the fanciful odes of the day. Its chief merit to her lies in its alliance to the strange Eastern air, which she heard at her first interview with the senator who presented her with the lute. Paraphrased in English, the words of the composition would run thus: —

THE ORIGIN OF MUSIC.

I.

Spirit, whose dominion reigns
Over Music's thrilling strains,
Whence may be thy distant birth?
Say what tempted thee to earth?

Mortal, listen; I was born
In Creation's early years,
Singing, 'mid the stars of morn,
To the music of the spheres.

Once, as within the realms of space,
I view'd this mortal planet roll,
A yearning towards thy hapless race,
Unbidden, filled my seraph soul!

Angels, who had watch'd my birth,
Heard me sigh to sing to earth;
'Twas transgression ne'er forgiv'n
To forget my native Heav'n;
So they sternly bade me go —
Banish'd to the world below.

II.

Exil'd here, I knew no fears;
For, though darkness round me clung,
Though none heard me in the spheres,
Earth had listeners while I sung.

Young spirits of the Spring-sweet breeze
 Came thronging round me, soft and coy ;
 Light Wood-nymphs sported in the trees,
 And laughing Echo leapt for joy !

Brooding Woe and writhing Pain
 Soften'd at my gentle strain ;
 Bounding Joy, with footstep fleet,
 Ran to nestle at my feet ;
 While aroused, delighted Love
 Softly kiss'd me from above !

III.

Since those years of early time,
 Faithful still to earth I've sung ;
 Flying through each distant clime,
 Ever welcome, ever young !

Still pleas'd, my solace I impart,
 Where brightest hopes are scattered dead :
 'Tis mine — sweet gift ! — to charm the heart,
 Though all its other joys have fled !

Time, that withers all beside,
 Harmless past me loves to glide ;
 Change, that mortals must obey,
 Ne'er shall shake my gentle sway ;
 Still 'tis mine all hearts to move
 In eternity of love !

As the last sounds of her voice and her lute died softly away upon the still night air, an indescribable elevation appeared in the girl's countenance. She looked up rapturously into the far, star-bright sky; her lip quivered; her dark eyes filled with tears; and her bosom heaved with the excess of the emotions that the music and the scene inspired. Then she gazed slowly around her, dwelling tenderly upon the fragrant flowerbeds that were the work of her own hands, and looking forth with an expression half reverential, half ec-

static, over the long, smooth, shining plains, and the still, glorious mountains, that had so long been the inspiration of her most cherished thoughts, and that now glowed before her eyes, soft and beautiful as her dreams on her virgin couch. Then, overpowered by the artless thoughts and innocent recollections which on the magic wings of Nature and Night came wafted over her mind, she bent down her head upon her lute; pressed her round, dimpled cheek against its smooth frame, and, drawing her fingers mechanically over its strings, abandoned herself unreservedly to the reveries of maidenhood and youth.

Such was the being devoted by her father's fatal ambition to a life-long banishment from all that is attractive in human art, and beautiful in human intellect! Such was the daughter whose existence was to be one long acquaintance with mortal woe, one unvaried refusal of mortal pleasure, whose thoughts were to be only of sermons and fasts, whose actions were to be confined to the binding of strangers' wounds and the drying of strangers' tears, whose life, in brief, was doomed to be the embodiment of her father's austere ideal of the austere virgins of the ancient Church!

Deprived of her mother, exiled from the companionship of others of her age, permitted no familiarity with any living being — no sympathies with any other heart, commanded but never indulged, rebuked but never applauded; she must have sunk beneath the severities imposed on her by her father, but for the venial disobedience committed in the pursuit of the

solitary pleasure procured for her by her lute. Vainly, in her hours of study, did she read the fierce anathemas against love, liberty, and pleasure, poetry, painting, and music, gold, silver, and precious stones, which the ancient fathers had composed for the benefit of the submissive congregations of former days; vainly did she imagine, during those long hours of theological instruction, that her heart's forbidden longings were banished and destroyed — that her patient and child-like disposition was bowed in complete subserviency to the most rigorous of her father's commands. No sooner were her interviews with Numerian concluded, than the promptings of that nature within us, which artifice may warp but can never destroy, lured her into a forgetfulness of all that she had heard and a longing for much that was forbidden. We live, in this existence, but by the companionship of some sympathy, aspiration, or pursuit, which serves us as our habitual refuge from the tribulations we inherit from the outer world. The same feeling which led Antonina, in her childhood, to beg for a flower-garden; in her girlhood, induced her to gain possession of a lute.

The passion for music which prompted her visit to Vetrico, which alone saved her affections from pining in the solitude imposed on them, and which occupied her leisure hours in the manner we have already described, was an inheritance of her birth.

Her Spanish mother had sung to her, hour after hour, in her cradle, for the short time during which she was permitted to watch over her child. The im-

pression thus made on the dawning faculties of the infant, nothing ever effaced. Though her earliest perceptions were greeted only by the sight of her father's misery; though the form which his despairing penitence soon assumed, doomed her to a life of seclusion and an education of admonition, the passionate attachment to the melody of sound, inspired by her mother's voice — almost imbibed at her mother's breast, lived through all neglect and survived all opposition. It found its nourishment in childish recollections, in snatches of street minstrelsy heard through her window, in the passage of the night winds of winter through the groves on the Pincian Mount; and received its rapturous gratification in the first audible sounds from the Roman senator's lute. How her possession of an instrument, and her skill in playing, were subsequently gained, the reader already knows from Vetrano's narrative at Ravenna. Could the frivolous senator have discovered the real intensity of the emotions his art was raising in his pupil's bosom, while he taught her; could he have imagined how incessantly, during their lessons, her sense of duty struggled with her love for music — how completely she was absorbed, one moment by an agony of doubt and fear, another, by an ecstasy of enjoyment and hope; he would have felt little of that astonishment at her coldness towards himself, which he so warmly expressed at his interview with Julia in the gardens of the Court. In truth, nothing could be more complete than Antonina's childish unconsciousness of the feelings with which

Vetranio regarded her. In entering his presence, whatever remnant of her affections remained unwithered by her fears, was solely attracted and engrossed by the beloved and beautiful lute. In receiving the instrument she almost forgot the giver, in the triumph of possession; or, if she thought of him at all, it was to be grateful for having escaped uninjured from a member of that class, for whom her father's reiterated admonitions had inspired her with a vague feeling of dread and distrust, and to determine that, now she had acknowledged his kindness and departed from his domains, nothing should ever induce her to risk discovery by her father and peril to herself, by ever entering them again.

Innocent in her isolation, almost infantine in her natural simplicity, a single enjoyment was sufficient to satisfy all the passions of her age. Father, mother, lover, and companion; liberties, amusements, and adornments — they were all summed up for her in that simple lute. The archness, the liveliness, and the gentleness of her disposition; the poetry of her nature, and the affection of her heart; the happy bloom of youth which seclusion could not all wither, nor distorted precept taint, were now entirely nourished, expanded, and freshened — such is the creative power of human emotion — by that inestimable possession. She could speak to it, smile on it, caress it; and believe in the ecstasy of her delight, in the carelessness of her self-delusion, that it sympathised with her joy. During her long solitudes, when she was silently

watched in her father's absence by the brooding, melancholy stranger whom he had set over her, it became a companion dearer than the flower-garden, dearer even than the plains and mountains which formed her favourite view. When her father returned, and she was led forth to sit in a dark place among strange, silent people, and to listen to interminable declamations, it was a solace to think of the instrument, as it lay hidden securely in her chamber; and to ponder delightedly on what new music of her own she could play upon it next. And then, when evening arrived, and she was left alone in her garden — then came the hour of moonlight and song; the moment of rapture and melody that drew her out of herself, elevated her she felt not how, and transported her she knew not whither.

But, while we thus linger over reflections on motives and examinations into character, we are called back to the outer world of passing interests and events, by the appearance of another figure on the scene. We left Antonina in the garden thinking over her lute. She still remains in her meditative position, but she is now no longer alone.

From the same steps by which she had descended, a man now advances into the garden, and walks towards the place she occupies. His gait is limping; his stature crooked; his proportions distorted. His large, angular features, stand out in gaunt contrast to his shrivelled cheeks. His dry, matted hair, has been burnt by the sun into a strange, tawny brown. His expression is

one of fixed, stern, mournful thought. As he steps stealthily along, advancing towards Antonina, he mutters to himself, and clutches mechanically at his garments, with his lank, shapeless fingers. The radiant moonlight falling fully upon his countenance invests it with a livid, mysterious, spectral appearance: seen by a stranger at the present moment he would have been almost awful to look upon.

This was the man who had intercepted Vetrico on his journey home, and who had now hurried back so as to regain his accustomed post before his master's return, for he was the same individual mentioned by Numerian as his aged convert, Ulpus, in his interview with the landholder at the Basilica of St. Peter.

When Ulpus had arrived within a few paces of the girl he stopped, saying, in a hoarse, thick voice:

"Hide your toy — Numerian is at the gates!"

Antonina started violently as she listened to those repulsive accents. The blood rushed into her cheeks; she hastily covered the lute with her robe; paused an instant, as if intending to speak to the man, then shuddered violently, and hurried towards the house.

As she mounted the steps Numerian met her in the hall. There was now no chance of hiding the lute in its accustomed place.

"You stay too late in the garden," said the father, looking proudly, in spite of all his austerity, upon his beautiful daughter, as she stood by his side. "But what affects you?" he added, noticing her confusion.

“You tremble; your colour comes and goes; your lips quiver; give me your hand!”

As Antonina obeyed him a fold of the treacherous robe slipped aside, and discovered a part of the frame of the lute. Numerian’s quick eye discovered it immediately. He snatched the instrument from her feeble grasp. His astonishment on beholding it was too great for words, and for an instant he confronted the poor girl, whose pale face looked rigid with terror, in ominous and expressive silence.

“This thing,” said he at length, “this invention of libertines in my house; in my daughter’s possession!” and he dashed the lute into fragments on the floor.

For one moment Antonina looked incredulously on the ruins of the beloved companion, which was the centre of all her happiest expectations for future days. Then as she began to estimate the reality of her deprivation her eyes lost all their heaven-born brightness, and filled to overflowing with the tears of earth.

“To your chamber!” thundered Numerian, as she knelt sobbing convulsively over those hapless fragments. “To your chamber! To-morrow shall bring this mystery of iniquity to light!”

She rose humbly to obey him, for indignation had no part in the emotions that shook her gentle and affectionate nature. As she moved towards the room that no lute was henceforth to occupy, as she thought on the morrow that no lute was henceforth to enliven, her grief almost overpowered her. She turned back and looked imploringly at her father, as if entreating

permission to pick up even the smallest of the fragments at his feet.

“To your chamber!” he reiterated, sternly. “Am I to be disobeyed to my face?”

Without any repetition of her silent remonstrance, she instantly retired. As soon as she was out of sight, Ulpus ascended the steps and stood before the angered father.

“Look, Ulpus,” cried Numerian, “my daughter whom I have so carefully cherished, whom I intended for an example to the world, has deceived me, even thus!”

He pointed as he spoke, to the ruins of the unfortunate lute, but Ulpus did not address to him a word in reply, and he hastily continued: —

“I will not sully the solemn offices of to-night by interrupting them with my worldly affairs. To-morrow, I will interrogate my disobedient child. In the meantime, do not imagine, Ulpus, that I connect you in any way with this wicked and unworthy deception! In you I have every confidence, in your faithfulness I have every hope!”

Again he paused, and again Ulpus kept silence. Any one less agitated, less confiding, than his unsuspecting master, would have remarked that a faint sinister smile was breaking forth upon his haggard countenance. But Numerian's indignation was still too violent to permit him to observe, and spite of his efforts to control himself, he again broke forth in complaint.

“On this night too, of all others,” cried he, “when I had hoped to lead her among my little assembly of the faithful, to join in their prayers, and to listen to my exhortations — on this night I am doomed to find her a player on a Pagan lute, a possessor of the most wanton of the world’s vanities! God give me patience to worship this night with unwandering thoughts, for my heart is vexed at the transgression of my child, as the heart of Eli of old at the iniquities of his sons!”

He was moving rapidly away, when, as if struck with a sudden recollection, he stopped abruptly, and again addressed his gloomy companion.

“I will go by myself to the chapel to-night,” said he. “You, Ulpus, will stay to keep watch over my disobedient child. Be vigilant, good friend, over my house, for even now, on my return, I thought that two strangers were following my steps, and I forebode some evil in store for me as the chastisement for my sins, even greater than this misery of my daughter’s transgression. Be watchful, good Ulpus — be watchful!”

And as he hurried away, the stern, serious man felt as overwhelmed at the outrage that had been offered to his gloomy fanaticism, as the weak, timid girl, at the destruction that had been wreaked upon her harmless lute.

After Numerian had departed, the sinister smile again appeared on the countenance of Ulpus. He stood for a short time fixed in thought, and then began slowly to descend a staircase near him, which led to some subterranean apartments. He had not gone far,

when a slight noise became audible at an extremity of the corridor above. As he listened for a repetition of the sound, he heard a sob, and looking cautiously up, discovered, by the moonlight, Antonina stepping cautiously along the marble pavement of the hall.

She held in her hand a little lamp; her small, rosy feet were uncovered; the tears still streamed over her cheeks. She advanced with the greatest caution (as if fearful of being over-heard) until she gained the part of the floor still strewn with the ruins of the broken lute. Here she knelt down, and pressed each fragment that lay before her separately to her lips. Then, hurriedly concealing a single piece in her bosom, she arose and stole quickly away, in the direction by which she had come.

"Be patient till the dawn," muttered her faithless guardian, gazing after her from his concealment, as she disappeared, "it will bring to thy lute a restorer, and to Ulpian an ally!"

CHAPTER VI.

An Apprenticeship to the Temple.

THE action of our characters during the night included in the last two Chapters, has now come to a pause. Vetrano is awaiting his guests for the banquet; Numerian is in the chapel, preparing the discourse that he is to deliver to his friends; Ulpian is meditating in his master's house; Antonina is stretched upon her couch, caressing the precious fragment that she has

saved from the ruins of her lute. All the immediate agents of our story are, for the present, in repose.

It is our purpose to take advantage of this interval of inaction, and direct the reader's attention to a different country from that selected as the scene of our romance, and to such historical events of past years as connect themselves remarkably with the early life of Numerian's perfidious convert. This man will be found a person of great importance in the future conduct of our story. It is necessary to the comprehension of his character, and the penetration of such of his purposes as have been already hinted at, and may subsequently appear, that the long course of his existence should be traced upwards to its source.

It was in the reign of Julian, when the gods of the Pagan achieved their last victory over the Gospel of the Christian, that a decently-attired man, leading by the hand a handsome boy of fifteen years of age, entered the gates of Alexandria, and proceeded hastily towards the High Priest's dwelling in the Temple of Serapis.

After a stay of some hours at his destination, the man left the city alone as hastily as he entered it, and was never after seen at Alexandria. The boy remained in the abode of the High Priest until the next day, when he was solemnly devoted to the service of the Temple.

The boy was the young Emilius, afterwards called Ulpius. He was nephew to the High Priest to whom

he had been confided by his father, a merchant of Rome.

Ambition was the ruling passion of the father of Emilius. It had prompted him to aspire to every distinction granted to the successful by the state, but it had not gifted him with the powers requisite to turn his aspirations in any instance into acquisitions. He passed through existence a disappointed man, planning but never performing, seeing his more fortunate brother rising to the highest distinction in the priesthood, and finding himself irretrievably condemned to exist in the affluent obscurity ensured to him by his mercantile pursuits.

When his brother Macrinus, on Julian's accession to the Imperial throne, arrived at the pinnacle of power and celebrity as High Priest of the Temple of Serapis, the unsuccessful merchant lost all hope of rivalling his relative in the pursuit of distinction. His insatiable ambition, discarded from himself, now settled on one of his infant sons. He determined that his child should be successful where he had failed. Now that his brother had secured the highest elevation in the Temple, no calling could offer more direct advantages to a member of his household than the priesthood. His family had been from their earliest origin rigid Pagans. One of them had already attained to the most distinguished honours of his gorgeous worship. He determined that another should rival his kinsman, and that that other should be his eldest son.

Firm in this resolution, he at once devoted his child to the great design which he now held continually in view. He knew well that Paganism, revived though it was, was not the universal worship that it had been; that it was now secretly resisted, and might, soon, be openly opposed by the persecuted Christians throughout the empire; and that if the young generation were to guard it successfully from all future encroachments, and to rise securely to its highest honours, more must be exacted from them, than the easy attachment to the ancient religion required from the votaries of former days. Then, the performance of the most important offices in the priesthood was compatible with the possession of military or political rank. Now, it was to the Temple, and to the Temple only, that the future servant of the gods should be devoted. Resolving thus, the father took care that all the son's occupations and rewards should, from his earliest years, be in some way connected with the career for which he was intended. His childish pleasures were to be conducted to sacrifices and auguries; his childish playthings and prizes were images of the deities. No opposition was offered on the boy's part to this plan of education. Far different from his younger brother, whose turbulent disposition defied all authority, he was naturally docile; and his imagination, vivid beyond his years, was easily led captive by any remarkable object presented to it. With such encouragement, his father became thoroughly engrossed by the occupation of forming him for his future exis-

tence. His mother's influence over him was jealously watched; the secret expression of her love, of her sorrow at the prospect of parting with him, was ruthlessly suppressed, whenever it was discovered; and his younger brother was neglected, almost forgotten, in order that the parental watchfulness might be entirely and invariably devoted to the eldest son.

When Emilius had numbered fifteen years, his father saw with delight that the time had come when he could witness the commencement of the realisation of all his projects. The boy was removed from home, taken to Alexandria, and gladly left, by his proud and triumphant father, under, the especial guardianship of Macrinus, the High Priest.

The chief of the temple fully sympathised in his brother's designs for the young Emilius. As soon as the boy had entered on his new occupations, he was told that he must forget all that he had left behind him at Rome; that he must look upon the High Priest as his father, and upon the Temple, henceforth, as his home; and that the sole object of his present labours and future ambition, must be to rise in the service of the gods. Nor did Macrinus stop here. So thoroughly anxious was he to stand to his pupil in the place of a parent, and to secure his allegiance by withdrawing him in every way from the world in which he had hitherto lived, that he even changed his name, giving to him one of his own appellations, and describing it as a privilege to stimulate him to future exertions. From

the boy Emilius, he was now permanently transformed to the student Ulpus.

With such a natural disposition as we have already described, and under such guardianship as that of the High Priest, there was little danger that Ulpus would disappoint the unusual expectations which had been formed of him. His attention to his new duties never relaxed; his obedience to his new masters never wavered. Whatever Macrinus demanded of him he was sure to perform. Whatever longings he might feel to return to home, he never discovered them — he never sought to gratify the tastes naturally peculiar to his age. The high priest and his colleagues were astonished at the extraordinary readiness with which the boy himself forwarded their intentions for him. Had they known how elaborately he had been prepared for his future employments at his father's house, they would have been less astonished at their pupil's unusual docility. Trained as he had been, he must have shown a more than human perversity had he displayed any opposition to his uncle's wishes. He had been permitted no childhood, either of thought or action. His natural precocity had been seized as the engine to force his faculties into a perilous and unwholesome maturity; and when his new duties demanded his attention, he entered on them with the same sincerity of enthusiasm which his boyish coevals would have exhibited towards a new sport. His gradual initiation into the mysteries of his religion, created a strange, voluptuous sensation of fear and interest in his mind.

He heard the oracles, and he trembled; he attended the sacrifices and the auguries, and he wondered. All the poetry of the bold and beautiful superstition to which he was devoted, flowed overwhelmingly into his young heart, absorbing the service of his fresh imagination, and transporting him incessantly from the vital realities of the outer world, to the shadowy regions of aspiration and thought.

But his duties did not entirely occupy the attention of Ulpus. The boy had his peculiar pleasures as well as his peculiar occupations. When his employments were over for the day, it was a strange, unearthly, vital enjoyment to him to wander softly in the shade of the Temple porticos, looking down from his great mysterious eminence upon the populous and sun-brightened city at his feet; watching the brilliant expanse of the waters of the Nile glittering joyfully in the dazzling and pervading light; raising his eyes from the fields and woods, the palaces and gardens, that stretched out before him below, to the lovely and cloudless sky that watched round him afar and above, and that awoke all that his new duties had left of the joyfulness, the affectionate sensibility which his rare intervals of uninterrupted intercourse with his mother had implanted in his heart. Then when the daylight began to wane, and the moon and stars already grew beautiful in their places in the firmament, he would pass into the subterranean vaults of the edifice, trembling as his little taper scarcely dispelled the dull, solemn gloom, and listening with breathless attention

for the voices of those guardian spirits, whose fabled habitation was made in the apartments of the sacred place. Or — when the multitude had departed for their amusements and their homes — he would steal into the lofty halls and wander round the pedestals of the mighty statues, breathing fearfully the still atmosphere of the Temple, and watching the passage of the cold, melancholy moonbeams through the openings in the roof, and over the colossal limbs and features of the images of the Pagan gods. Sometimes when the services of Serapis, and the cares attendant on his communications with the Emperor were concluded, Macrinus would lead his pupil into the garden of the priests, and praise him for his docility till his heart throbbed with gratitude and pride. Sometimes he would convey him cautiously outside the precincts of the sacred place, and show him in the suburbs of the city, silent, pale, melancholy men, gliding suspiciously through the gay, crowded streets. Those fugitive figures, he would declare were the enemies of the Temple and all that it contained; conspirators against the Emperor and the gods; wretches who were to be driven forth as outcasts from humanity; whose appellation was “Christian;” and whose impious worship, if tolerated, would deprive him of the uncle whom he loved, of the Temple that he revered, and of the priestly dignity and renown which it should be his life’s ambition to acquire.

Thus tutored in his duties by his guardian, and in his recreations by himself, as time wore on, the boy

gradually lost every remaining characteristic of his age. Even the remembrance of his mother and his mother's love, grew faint on his memory. Serious, solitary, thoughtful, he lived but to succeed in the Temple; he laboured but to emulate the high priest. All his feelings and faculties were now enslaved by an ambition, at once unnatural at his present age, and ominous of affliction for his future life. The design that Macrinus had contemplated as the work of years, was perfected in a few months. The hope that his father had scarce dared to entertain for his manhood, was already accomplished in his youth.

In these preparations for future success passed three years of the life of Ulpian. At the expiration of that period, the death of Julian darkened the brilliant prospects of the Pagan world. Scarcely had the priests of Serapis recovered the first shock of astonishment and grief, consequent upon the fatal news of the vacancy in the Imperial throne, when the edict of toleration, issued by Jovian the new Emperor, reached the city of Alexandria, and was elevated on the walls of the temple.

The first sight of this proclamation (permitting freedom of worship to the Christians) aroused in the highly-wrought disposition of Ulpian the most violent emotions of anger and contempt. The enthusiasm of his character and age, guided invariably in the one direction of his worship, took the character of the wildest fanaticism when he discovered the Emperor's careless infringement of the supremacy of the temple.

He volunteered in the first moments of his fury, to tear down the edict from the walls; to lead an attack on the meetings of the triumphant Christians; or to travel to the Imperial abode, and exhort Jovian to withdraw his act of perilous leniency ere it was too late. With difficulty did his more cautious confederates restrain him from the execution of his impetuous designs. For two days he withdrew himself from his companions, and brooded in solitude over the injury offered to his beloved superstition, and the prospective augmentation of the influence of the Christian sect.

But the despair of the young enthusiast was destined to be further augmented by a private calamity, at once mysterious in its cause and overwhelming in its effect. Two days after the publication of the edict, the High Priest Macrinus, in the prime of vigour and manhood, suddenly died.

To narrate the confusion and horror within and without the temple on the discovery of this fatal event, to describe the execrations and tumults of the priests and the populace, who at once suspected the favoured and ambitious Christians of causing, by poison, the death of their spiritual ruler, might be interesting as a history of the manners of the times, but is immaterial to the object of this Chapter. We prefer rather to trace the effect on the mind of Ulpian, of his personal and private bereavement; of this loss — irretrievable to him — of the master whom he loved and the guardian whom it was his privilege to revere.

An illness of some months, during the latter part

of which his attendants trembled for his life and reason, sufficiently attested the sincerity of the grief of Ulpian for the loss of his protector. During his paroxysms of delirium, the priests who watched round his bed, drew from his ravings many wise conclusions as to the effects that his seizure and its causes were likely to produce on his future character; but in spite of all their penetration, they were still far from appreciating to a tittle of its extent the revolution that his bereavement had wrought in his disposition. The boy himself, until the moment of the High Priest's death, had never been aware of the depth of his devotion to his second father. Warped as they had been by his natural parent, the affectionate qualities that were the main-spring of his nature had never been entirely destroyed; and they seized on every kind word and gentle action of Macrinus, as food which had been grudged them since their birth. Morally and intellectually, Macrinus had been to him the beacon that pointed the direction of his course, the judge that regulated his conduct, the Muse that he looked to for inspiration. And now, when this link which had connected every ramification of his most cherished and governing ideas, was suddenly snapt asunder, a desolation sunk down upon his mind which at once paralysed its elasticity and withered its freshness. He glanced back, and he saw nothing but a home from whose pleasures and affections his father's ambition had exiled him for ever. He looked forward, and as he thought of his unfitness, both from character and education, to mix in the world as others mixed in

it, he saw no guiding star of social happiness for the conduct of his existence to come. There was now no resource left for him, but entirely to deliver himself up to those pursuits which had made his home as a strange place to him; which were hallowed by their connection with the lost object of his attachment, and which would confer the sole happiness and distinction that he could hope for in the wide world on his future life.

In addition to this motive for labour in his vocation, there existed in the mind of Ulpian a deep and settled feeling that animated him with unceasing ardour for the prosecution of his cherished occupations. This governing principle was detestation of the Christian sect. The suspicion that others had entertained regarding the death of the High Priest was, to his mind, a certainty. He rejected every idea which opposed his determined persuasion, that the jealousy of the Christians had prompted them to the murder, by poison, of the most powerful and zealous of the Pagan priests. To labour incessantly until he attained the influence and position formerly enjoyed by his relative, and to use that influence and position when once acquired, as the means of avenging Macrinus, by sweeping every vestige of the Christian faith from the face of the earth, were now the settled purposes of his heart. Inspired by his determination with the deliberate wisdom which is, in most men, the result only of the experience of years, he employed the first days of his convalescence in cautiously maturing his future plans, and impartially calculating his chances of success. This

self-examination completed, he devoted himself at once and for ever to his life's great design. Nothing wearied, nothing discouraged, nothing impeded him. Outward events passed by him unnoticed; the city's afflictions and the city's triumphs spoke no longer to his heart. Year succeeded to year, but Time had no tongue for him. Paganism gradually sank, and Christianity imperceptibly rose, but Change spread no picture before his eyes. The whole outward world was a void to him, until the moment arrived that beheld him successful in his designs. His preparations for the future absorbed every faculty of his nature, and left him, as to the present, a mere automaton, reflecting no principle, and animated by no event, — a machine that moved, but did not perceive, — a body that acted, without a mind that thought.

Returning for a moment to the outward world, we find that on the death of Jovian in 364, Valentinian, the new Emperor, continued the system of toleration adopted by his predecessor. On his death in 375, Gratian, the successor to the imperial throne, so far improved on the example of the two former potentates as to range himself boldly on the side of the partisans of the new faith. Not content with merely encouraging, both by precept and example, the growth of Christianity, the Emperor further testified his zeal for the rising religion, by inflicting incessant persecutions upon the rapidly decreasing advocates of the ancient worship; serving, by these acts of his reign, as pioneer to his successor, Theodosius the Great, in the religious

revolution which that illustrious opponent of Paganism was destined to effect.

The death of Gratian, in 383, saw Ulpian enrolled among the chief priests of the temple, and pointed out as the next inheritor of the important office once held by the powerful and active Macrinus. Beholding himself thus secure of the distinction for which he had laboured, the aspiring priest found leisure, at length, to look forth upon the affairs of the passing day. From every side desolation darkened the prospect that he beheld. Already, throughout many provinces of the Empire, the temples of the gods had been overthrown by the destructive zeal of the triumphant Christians. Already hosts of the terrified people, fearing that the fate of their idols might ultimately be their own, finding themselves deserted by their disbanded priests, and surrounded by the implacable enemies of the ancient faith, had renounced their worship for the sake of saving their lives and securing their property. On the wide field of Pagan ruin there now rose but one structure entirely unimpaired. The Temple of Serapis still reared its head — unshaken, unbending, unpolluted. Here the sacrifice still prospered and the people still bowed in worship. Before this monument of the religious glories of ages, even the rising power of Christian supremacy quailed in dismay. Though the ranks of its once multitudinous congregations were now perceptibly thinned, though the new churches swarmed with converts, though the edicts from Rome denounced it as a blot on the face of the earth, its gloomy and

solitary grandeur was still preserved. No unhallowed foot trod its secret recesses; no destroying hand was raised, as yet, against its ancient and glorious walls.

Indignation, but not despondency, filled the heart of Ulpus as he surveyed the situation of the Pagan world. A determination nourished as his had been by the reflections of years, and matured by incessant industry of deliberation, is above all those shocks which affect a hasty decision, or destroy a wavering intention. Impervious to failure, disasters urge it into action, but never depress it to repose. Its existence is the air that preserves the vitality of the mind — the spring that moves the action of the thoughts. Never for a moment did Ulpus waver in his devotion to his great design, or despair of its ultimate execution and success. Though every succeeding day brought the news of fresh misfortunes for the Pagans and fresh triumphs for the Christians, still, with a few of his more zealous comrades, he persisted in expecting the advent of another Julian, and a day of restoration for the dismantled shrines of the deities that he served. While the Temple of Serapis stood uninjured, to give encouragement to his labours and refuge to his persecuted brethren, there existed for him such an earnest of success as would spur him to any exertion, and nerve him against any peril.

And now, to the astonishment of priests and congregations, the silent, thoughtful, solitary Ulpus, suddenly started from his long repose, and stood forth the fiery advocate of the rights of his invaded worship.

In a few days, the fame of his addresses to the Pagans who still attended the rites of Serapis, spread throughout the whole city. The boldest among the Christians, as they passed the Temple walls, involuntarily trembled when they heard the vehemence of the applause which arose from the audience of the inspired priest. Addressed to all varieties of age and character, these harangues woke an echo in every breast they reached. To the young they were clothed in all the poetry of the worship for which they pleaded. They dwelt on the altars of Venus that the Christians would lay waste; on the woodlands that the Christians would disenchant of their Dryads; on the hallowed Arts that the Christians would arise and destroy. To the aged they called up remembrances of the glories of the past, achieved through the favour of the Gods; of ancestors who had died in their service; of old forgotten loves and joys, and successes, that had grown and prospered under the gentle guardianship of the deities of old — while the unvarying burden of their conclusion to all, was the reiterated assertion that the illustrious Macrinus had died a victim to the toleration of the Christian sect.

But the efforts of Ulpus were not confined to the delivery of orations. Every moment of his leisure time was dedicated to secret pilgrimages into Alexandria. Careless of peril, regardless of threats, the undaunted enthusiast penetrated into the most private meeting-places of the Christians; reclaiming on every side apostates to the Pagan creed, and defying the

hostility of half the city from the stronghold of the Temple walls. Day after day fresh recruits arrived to swell the ranks of the worshippers of Serapis. The few members of the scattered congregations of the provinces, who still remained faithful to the ancient worship, were gathered together in Alexandria by the private messengers of the unwearied Ulpian. Already tumults began to take place between the Pagans and the Christians; and even now the priest of Serapis prepared to address a protest to the new Emperor in behalf of the ancient religion of the land. At this moment it seemed probable that the heroic attempts of one man to prop the structure of superstition, whose foundations were undermined throughout, and whose walls were attacked by thousands, might actually be crowned with success.

But Time rolled on; and with him came inexorable Change, trampling over the little barriers set up against it by human opposition, and erecting its strange and transitory fabrics triumphantly in their stead. In vain did the devoted priest exert all his powers to augment and combine his scattered band; in vain did the mighty Temple display its ancient majesty, its gorgeous sacrifices, its mysterious auguries. The spirit of Christianity was forth for triumph on the earth — the last destinies of Paganism were fast accomplishing. Yet a few seasons more of unavailing resistance passed by; and then the Archbishop of Alexandria issued his decree that the Temple of Serapis should be destroyed.

At the rumour of their primate's determination, the Christian fanatics rose by swarms from every corner of Egypt; and hurried into Alexandria to be present at the work of demolition. From the arid solitudes of the Desert — from their convents on rocks, and their caverns in the earth, hosts of rejoicing monks flew to the city gates, and ranged themselves with the soldiery and the citizens, impatient for the assault. At the dawn of morning this assembly of destroyers was convened; and as the sun rose over Alexandria they arrived before the Temple walls.

The gates of the glorious structure were barred — the walls were crowded with their Pagan defenders. A still, dead, mysterious silence reigned over the whole edifice; and of all the men who thronged it, one only moved from his appointed place; one only wandered incessantly from point to point, wherever the building was open to assault. Those among the besiegers who were nearest the Temple saw in this presiding genius of the preparations for defence, the object at once of their most malignant hatred, and their most ungovernable dread — Ulpus the priest.

As soon as the Archbishop gave the signal for the assault, a band of monks — their harsh discordant voices screaming fragments of psalms, their tattered garments waving in the air, their cadaverous faces gleaming with ferocious joy — led the way, placed the first ladders against the walls, and began the attack. From all sides the Temple was assailed by the infuriated besiegers, and on all sides it was suc-

cessfully defended by the resolute besieged. Shock after shock fell upon the massive gates without forcing them to recede; missile after missile was hurled at the building, but no breach was made in its solid surface. Multitudes scaled the walls, gained the outer porticos, and slaughtered their Pagan defenders, but were incessantly repulsed in their turn ere they could make their advantage good. Over and over again did the assailants seem on the point of storming the Temple successfully, but the figure of Ulpus, invariably appearing at the critical moment among his disheartened followers, acted like a fatality in destroying the effect of the most daring exertions and the most important triumphs. Wherever there was danger, wherever there was carnage, wherever there was despair, thither strode the undaunted priest, inspiring the bold, succouring the wounded, re-animating the feeble. Blinded by no stratagem, wearied by no fatigue, there was something almost demoniac in his activity for destruction, in his determination under defeat. The besiegers marked his course round the Temple by the calamities that befell them at his every step. If the bodies of slaughtered Christians were flung down upon them from the walls, they felt that Ulpus was there. If the bravest of the soldiery hesitated at mounting the ladders, it was known that Ulpus was directing the defeat of their comrades above. If a sally from the Temple drove back the advanced guard upon the reserves in the rear, it was pleaded as their excuse that Ulpus was fighting at the head of his Pagan bands. Crowd

on crowd of Christian warriors still pressed forward to the attack; but though the ranks of the unbelievers were perceptibly thinned, though the gates that defended them at last began to quiver before the reiterated blows by which they were assailed, every court of the sacred edifice yet remained in the possession of the besieged, and was at the disposal of the unconquered captain who organised the defence.

Depressed by the failure of his efforts, and horrified at the carnage already perpetrated among his adherents, the Archbishop suddenly commanded a cessation of hostilities, and proposed to the defenders of the Temple a short and favourable truce. After some delay, and apparently at the expense of some discord among their ranks, the Pagans sent to the Primate an assurance of their acceptance of his terms, which were that both parties should abstain from any further struggle for the ascendancy until an edict from Theodosius determining the ultimate fate of the Temple should be applied for and obtained.

The truce once agreed on, the wide space before the respite edifice was gradually cleared of its occupants. Slowly and sadly the Archbishop and his followers departed from the ancient walls whose summits they had assaulted in vain; and when the sun went down, of the great multitude congregated in the morning a few corpses were all that remained. Within the sacred building, Death and Repose ruled with the night, where morning had brightly glittered on Life and Action. The wounded, the wearied, and the cold,

all now lay hushed alike, fanned by the night breezes that wandered through the lofty porticos, or soothed by the obscurity that reigned over the silent halls. Among the ranks of the Pagan devotees but one man still toiled and thought. Round and round the Temple, restless as a wild beast that is threatened in his lair, watchful as a lonely spirit in a city of strange tombs, wandered the solitary and brooding Ulpus. For him there was no rest of body — no tranquillity of mind. On the events of the next few days hovered the fearful chance that was soon, either for misery or happiness, to influence irrevocably the years of his future life. Round and round the mighty walls he watched with mechanical and useless anxiety. Every stone in the building was eloquent to his lonely heart — beautiful to his wild imagination. On those barren structures stretched for him the loved and fertile home; *there* was the shrine for whose glory his intellect had been enslaved, for whose honour his youth had been sacrificed! Round and round the secret recesses and sacred courts he paced with hurried footstep, cleansing with gentle and industrious hand the stains of blood and the defilements of warfare from the statues at his side. Sad, solitary, thoughtful, as in the first days of his apprenticeship to the Gods, he now roved in the same moonlit recesses where Macrinus had taught him in his youth. As the menacing tumults of the day had aroused his fierceness, so the stillness of the quiet night awakened his gentleness. He had combated for the Temple in the morning as a son for a parent, and

he now watched over it at night as a miser over his treasure, as a lover over his mistress, as a mother over her child!

The days passed on; and at length the memorable morning arrived, which was to determine the fate of the last Temple that Christian fanaticism had spared to the admiration of the world. At an early hour of the morning, the diminished numbers of the Pagan zealots met their re-inforced and determined opponents — both sides being alike unarmed — in the great square of Alexandria. The Imperial rescript was then publicly read. It began by assuring the Pagans, that their priest's plea for protection for the Temple had received the same consideration which had been bestowed on the petition against the gods, presented by the Christian Archbishop; and ended by proclaiming the commands of the Emperor, that Serapis and all other idols in Alexandria should immediately be destroyed.

The shout of triumph which followed the conclusion of the Imperial edict still rose from the Christian ranks when the advanced guard of the soldiers appointed to insure the execution of the Emperor's designs appeared in the square. For a few minutes the forsaken Pagans stood rooted to the spot where they had assembled, gazing at the warlike preparations around them in a stupor of bewilderment and despair. Then as they recollected how diminished were their numbers, how arduous had been their first defence against a few, and how impossible would be a second defence against many — from the boldest to the feeblest, a panic

seized on them; and, regardless of Ulpus, regardless of honour, regardless of the gods, they turned with one accord and fled from the place.

With the flight of the Pagans the work of demolition began. Even women and children hurried to join in the welcome task of indiscriminate destruction. No defenders on this occasion barred the gates of the Temple to the Christian hosts. The sublime solitude of the tenantless building was outraged and invaded in an instant. Statues were broken, gold was carried off, doors were splintered into fragments — but here for a while the progress of demolition was delayed. Those to whom the labour of ruining the outward structure had been confided, were less successful than their neighbours who had pillaged its contents. The ponderous stones of the pillars, the massive surfaces of the walls resisted the most vigorous of their puny efforts, and forced them to remain contented with mutilating that which they could not destroy — with tearing off roofs, defacing marbles, and demolishing capitals. The rest of the buildings remained uninjured, and grander even now in the wildness of ruin than ever it had been in the stateliness of perfection and strength.

But the most important achievement still remained, the deathwound of Paganism was yet to be struck, the idol Serapis which had ruled the hearts of millions, and was renowned in the remotest corners of the empire — was to be destroyed! A breathless silence pervaded the Christian ranks as they filled the hall of the god. A superstitious dread to which they had

hitherto thought themselves superior, - overcame their hearts, as a single soldier, bolder than his fellows, mounted by a ladder to the head of the colossal statue, and struck at its cheek with an axe. The blow had scarcely been dealt when a deep groan was heard from the opposite wall of the apartment, succeeded by a noise of retreating footsteps; and then all was silent again. For a few minutes this incident stayed the feet of those who were about to join their companion in the mutilation of the idol, but after an interval their hesitation vanished, they dealt blow after blow at the statue and no more groans followed, — no more sounds were heard, save the wild echoes of the strokes of hammer, crowbar, and club, resounding through the lofty hall. In an incredibly short space of time the image of Serapis lay in great fragments on the marble floor. The multitude seized on the limbs of the idol and ran forth to drag them in triumph through the streets. Yet a few minutes more, and the ruins were untenanted, the Temple was silent, Paganism was destroyed!

Throughout the ravaging course of the Christians over the Temple, they had been followed with dogged perseverance, and at the same time with the most perfect impunity, by the only Pagan of all his brethren who had not sought safety by flight. This man being acquainted with every private passage and staircase in the sacred building, was enabled to be secretly present at each fresh act of demolition, in whatever part of the edifice it might be perpetrated. From hall to hall,

and from room to room, he tracked with noiseless step and glaring eye the movements of the Christian mob, — now hiding himself behind a pillar, now passing into concealed cavities in the walls, now looking down from imperceptible fissures in the roof; but whatever his situation, invariably watching from it, with the same industry of attention, and the same silence of emotion, the minutest acts of spoliation committed by the most humble follower of the Christian ranks. It was only when he entered with the victorious ravagers the vast apartment occupied by the idol Serapis, that the man's countenance began to give evidence of the agony under which his heart was writhing within him. He mounted a private staircase cut in the hollow of the massive wall of the room, and gaining a passage that run round the extremities of the ceiling, looked through a sort of lattice, concealed in the ornaments of the cornice. As he gazed down and saw the soldier mounting, axe in hand, to the idol's head, great drops of perspiration trickled from his forehead. His hot, thick breath hissed through his closed teeth, and his hands strained at the strong metal supports of the lattice, until they bent beneath his grasp. When the stroke descended on the image he closed his eyes. When the fragment detached by the blow fell on the floor, a groan burst from his quivering lips. For one moment more he glared down with a gaze of horror upon the multitude at his feet, and then with frantic speed he descended the steep stairs by which he had mounted to the roof, and fled from the Temple.

The same night this man was again seen by some shepherds, whom curiosity led to visit the desecrated building, weeping bitterly in its ruined and deserted porticos. As they approached to address him, he raised his head, and with a supplicating action signed to them to leave the place. For the few moments during which he confronted them, the moonlight shone full upon his countenance, and the shepherds, who had in former days attended the ceremonies of the Temple, saw with astonishment that the solitary mourner whose meditations they had disturbed was no other than Ulpian the Priest.

At the dawn of day these shepherds had again occasion to pass the walls of the pillaged Temple. Throughout the hours of the night the remembrance of the scene of unsoled, unpartaken grief that they had beheld — of the awful loneliness of misery in which they had seen the heart-broken and forsaken man, whose lightest words they had once delighted to revere — inspired them with a feeling of pity for the deserted Pagan, widely at variance with the spirit of persecution which the spurious Christianity of their day would fain have instilled in the bosoms of its humblest votaries. Bent on consolation, anxious to afford help, these men, like the Samaritan of old, went up at their own peril to succour a brother in affliction. They searched every portion of the empty building, but the object of their sympathy was nowhere to be seen. They called, but heard no answering sound, save the dirging of the winds of early morning through the ruined halls, which

but a short time since had resounded with the eloquence of the once illustrious Priest. Except a few night-birds, already sheltered by the deserted edifice, not a living being moved in what was once the temple of the Eastern world. Ulpus was gone.

These events took place in the year 389. In 390, Pagan ceremonies were made treason by the laws throughout the whole Roman empire.

From that period, the scattered few who still adhered to the ancient faith became divided into three parties; each alike insignificant, whether considered as openly or secretly inimical to the new religion of the State at large.

The first party unsuccessfully endeavoured to elude the laws prohibitory of sacrifices and divinations, by concealing their religious ceremonies under the form of convivial meetings.

The second preserved their ancient respect for the theory of Paganism, but abandoned all hope and intention of ever again accomplishing its practice. By such timely concessions, many were enabled to preserve — and some even to attain — high and lucrative employments as officers of the State.

The third retired to their homes, the voluntary exiles of every religion; resigning the practice of their old worship as a necessity, and shunning the communion of Christians as a matter of choice.

Such were the unimportant divisions into which the last remnants of the once powerful Pagan com-

munity now subsided; but to none of them was the ruined and degraded Ulpus ever attached.

For five weary years — dating from the epoch of the prohibition of Paganism — he wandered through the Empire, visiting in every country the ruined shrines of his deserted worship — a friendless, hopeless, solitary man!

Throughout the whole of Europe and all of Asia and the East that still belonged to Rome, he bent his slow and toilsome course. In the fertile valleys of Gaul, over the burning sands of Africa, through the sun-bright cities of Spain, he travelled — unfriended as a man under a curse, lonely as a second Cain. Never for an instant did the remembrance of his ruined projects desert his memory, or his mad determination to revive his worship abandon his mind. At every relic of Paganism, however slight, that he encountered on his way, he found a nourishment for his fierce anguish, an employment for his vengeful thoughts. Often, in the little villages, children were frightened from their sports in a deserted temple, by the apparition of his gaunt, rigid figure among the tottering pillars, or the sound of his hollow voice as he muttered to himself among the ruins of the Pagan tombs. Often, in crowded cities, groups of men, congregated to talk over their remembrances of the fall of Paganism, found him listening at their sides, and comforting them when they carelessly regretted their ancient faith, with a smiling and whispered assurance that a time of restitution would yet come. By all opinions and in all

places he was regarded as a harmless madman, whose strange delusions and predilections were not to be combated, but to be indulged. Thus he wandered through the Christian world; regardless alike of lapse of time and change of climate; living within himself; mourning, as a luxury, over the fall of his worship; patient of wrongs, insults, and disappointments; watching for the opportunity that he still persisted in believing was yet to arrive; holding by his fatal determination, with all the recklessness of ambition and all the perseverance of revenge.

The five years passed away unheeded, uncalculated, unregretted by Ulpus. For him, living but in the past, hoping but for the future, space held no obstacles — time was an oblivion. Years pass as days, hours as moments, when the varying emotions which mark their existence on the memory, and distinguish their succession on the dial of the heart, exist no longer either for happiness or woe. Dead to all freshness of feeling, the mind of Ulpus, during the whole term of his wanderings, lay numbed beneath the one idea that possessed it. It was only at the expiration of those unheeded years, when the chances of travel turned his footsteps towards Alexandria, that his faculties burst from the long bondage which had oppressed them. Then — when he passed through those gates which he had entered in former years a proud ambitious boy, when he walked ungreeted through the ruined Temple where he had once lived illustrious and revered — his dull, cold thoughts arose strong and vital within him.

The spectacle of the scene of his former glories, which might have awakened despair in others, aroused the dormant passions, emancipated the stifled energies in *him*. The projects of vengeance and the visions of restoration which he had brooded over for five long years, now rose before him, as realised already under the vivid influence of the desecrated scenes around. As he stood beneath the shattered porticos of the sacred place, not a stone crumbling at his feet but rebuked him for his past inaction, and strengthened him for daring, for conspiracy, for revenge, in the service of the outraged gods. The ruined temples he had visited in his gloomy pilgrimages now became revived by his fancy; as, one by one, they rose on his toiling memory. Broken pillars soared from the ground; desecrated idols re-occupied their vacant pedestals; and he, the exile and the mourner, stood forth once again — the ruler, the teacher, and the priest. The time of restitution was come — though his understanding supplied him with no distinct projects, his heart urged him to rush blindly on the execution of his reform. The moment had arrived — Macrinus should yet be avenged; the Temple should at last be restored.

He descended into the city; he hurried — neither welcomed nor recognized — through the crowded streets; he entered the house of a man who had once been his friend and colleague in the days that were past; and poured forth to him his wild determinations and disjointed plans, entreating his assistance, and pro-

misgiving him a glorious success. But his old companion had become, by a timely conversion to Christianity, a man of property and reputation in Alexandria; and he turned from the friendless enthusiast with indignation and contempt. Repulsed, but not disheartened, Ulpius sought others whom he had known in his prosperity and renown. They had all renounced their ancient worship — they all received him with studied coldness or careless disdain; but he still persisted in his useless efforts. He blinded his eyes to their contemptuous looks; he shut his ears to their derisive words. Persevering in his self-delusion, he appointed them messengers to their brethren in other countries; captains of the conspiracy that was to commence in Alexandria; orators before the people when the memorable revolution had once begun. It was in vain that they refused all participation in his designs, he left them as the expressions of refusal rose to their lips; and hurried elsewhere, as industrious in his efforts, as devoted to his unwelcome mission, as if half the population of the city had vowed themselves joyfully to aid him in his frantic attempt.

Thus, during the whole day, he continued his labour of useless persuasion among those in the city who had once been his friends. When the evening came, he repaired, weary but not despondent, to the earthly paradise that he was determined to regain — to the Temple where he had once taught, and where he still imagined that he was again destined to preside. Here he proceeded, ignorant of the new laws,

careless of discovery and danger, to ascertain by divination, as in the days of old, whether failure or success awaited him ultimately in his great design.

Meanwhile the friends whose assistance Ulpus had determined to extort were far from remaining inactive on their parts after the departure of the aspiring priest. They remembered with terror that the laws affected as severely those concealing their knowledge of a Pagan intrigue as those actually engaged in directing a Pagan conspiracy; and their anxiety for their personal safety, overcoming every consideration of the dues of honour, or the claims of ancient friendship, they repaired in a body to the Prefect of the city, and informed him, with all the eagerness of apprehension, of the presence of Ulpus in Alexandria, and of the culpability of the schemes that he had proposed.

A search after the devoted Pagan was immediately commenced. He was found the same night before a ruined altar, brooding over the entrails of an animal that he had just sacrificed. Further proof of his guilt could not be required. He was taken prisoner; led forth the next morning to be judged, amid the execrations of the very people who had almost adored him once; and condemned the following day to suffer the penalty of death.

At the appointed hour the populace assembled to behold the execution. To their indignation and disappointment, however, when the officers of the city appeared before the prison, it was only to inform the spectators that the performance of the fatal ceremony

had been adjourned. After a mysterious delay of some weeks, they were again convened, not to witness the execution, but to receive the extraordinary announcement that the culprit's life had been spared, and that his amended sentence now condemned him to labour as a slave for life in the copper mines of Spain.

What powerful influence induced the Prefect to risk the odium of reprieving a prisoner whose guilt was so satisfactorily ascertained as that of Ulpian never was disclosed. Some declared that the city magistrate was still at heart a Pagan, and that he consequently shrunk from authorising the death of a man who had once been the most illustrious among the professors of the ancient creed. Others reported that Ulpian had secured the leniency of his judges by acquainting them with the position of one of those secret repositories of enormous treasure, supposed to exist beneath the foundations of the dismantled Temple of Serapis. But the truth of either of these rumours could never be satisfactorily proved. Nothing more was accurately discovered than that Ulpian was removed from Alexandria to the place of earthly torment set apart for him by the zealous authorities, at the dead of night; and that the sentry at the gate through which he departed heard him mutter to himself, as he was hurried onward, that his divinations had prepared him for defeat, but that the great day of Pagan restoration would yet arrive.

In the year 407, twelve years after the events above narrated, Ulpian entered the city of Rome.

He had not advanced far, before the gaiety and confusion in the streets appeared completely to bewilder him. He hastened to the nearest public garden that he could perceive, and avoiding the frequented paths, flung himself down, apparently fainting with exhaustion at the foot of a tree.

For some time he lay on the shady resting-place which he had chosen, gasping painfully for breath, his frame ever and anon shaken to its centre by sudden spasms, and his lips quivering with an agitation which he vainly endeavoured to suppress. So changed was his aspect, that the guards who had removed him from Alexandria, wretched as was his appearance even then, would have found it impossible to recognise him now as the same man whom they had formerly abandoned to slavery in the mines of Spain. The effluvia exhaled from the copper ore in which he had been buried for twelve years, had not only withered the flesh upon his bones, but had imparted to its surface a livid hue, almost death-like in its dulness. His limbs, wasted by age and distorted by suffering, bent and trembled beneath him, and his form, once so majestic in its noble proportions, was now so crooked and mis-shapen that whoever beheld him could only have imagined that he must have been deformed from his birth. Of the former man no characteristic remained but the expression of the stern, mournful eyes; and these, the truthful interpreters of the indomitable mind whose emotions they seemed created to express, preserved, unaltered by suffering and unimpaired by time, the

same look, partly of reflection, partly of defiance, and partly of despair, which had marked them in those past days when the temple was destroyed and the congregations of the Pagans dispersed.

But the repose at this moment demanded by his worn-out body was even yet denied to it by his untamed, unwearied mind; and as the voice of his old delusion spoke within him again, the devoted Priest rose from his solitary resting-place, and looked forth upon the great city, whose new worship he was vowed to overthrow.

“By years of patient watchfulness,” he whispered to himself, “have I succeeded in escaping successfully from my dungeon among the mines. Yet a little more cunning, a little more endurance, a little more vigilance, and I shall still live to people, by my own exertions, the deserted temples of Rome.”

As he spoke, he emerged from the grove into the street. The joyous sunlight — a stranger to him for years — shone warmly down upon his face, as if to welcome him to liberty and the world. The sounds of gay laughter rang in his ears, as if to woo him back to the blest enjoyments and amenities of life; but Nature’s influence and man’s example, were now silent alike to his lonely heart. Over its dreary wastes still reigned the ruthless ambition which had exiled love from his youth, and friendship from his manhood, and which was destined to end its mission of destruction by banishing tranquillity from his age. Scowling fiercely at all around and above him, he sought the

loneliest and shadiest streets. Solitude had now become a necessity to his heart. The "great gulph" of his unshared aspirations had long since socially separated him for ever from his fellow men. He thought, laboured, and suffered for himself alone.

To describe the years of unrewarded labour and unalleviated hardship endured by Ulpus in the place of his punishment; to dwell on the day that brought with it — whatever the season in the world above — the same unwearying inheritance of exertion and fatigue; to chronicle the history of night after night of broken slumber one hour, of wearying thought the next, would be to produce a picture, from the mournful monotony of which the attention of the reader would recoil with disgust. It will be here sufficient to observe, that the influence of the same infatuation which had nerved him to the defence of the assaulted Temple, and encouraged him to attempt his ill-planned restoration of Paganism, had preserved him through sufferings under which stronger and younger men would have sunk for ever; had prompted his determination to escape from his slavery; and had now brought him to Rome, — old, forsaken, and feeble as he was, to risk new perils, and suffer new afflictions, for the cause to which, body and soul, he had ruthlessly devoted himself for ever.

Urged, therefore, by his miserable delusion, he had now entered a city where even his name was unknown, faithful to his frantic project of opposing himself as a helpless, solitary man, against the people and govern-

ment of an Empire. During his term of slavery, regardless of his advanced years, he had arranged a series of projects, the gradual execution of which would have demanded the advantages of a long and vigorous life. He no more desired, as in his former attempt at Alexandria, to precipitate at all hazards the success of his designs. He was now prepared to watch, wait, plot, and contrive, for years on years; he was resigned to be contented with the poorest and slowest advancement — to be encouraged by the smallest prospect of ultimate triumph. Acting under this determination, he started his project, by devoting all that remained of his enfeebled energies to cautiously informing himself, by every means in his power, of the private, political, and religious sentiments of all men of influence in Rome. Wherever there was a popular assemblage, he attended it to gather the scandalous gossip of the day; wherever there was a chance of overhearing a private conversation, he contrived to listen to it unobserved. About the doors of taverns and the haunts of discharged servants, he lurked noiseless as a shadow, attentive alike to the careless revelations of intoxication, or the scurrility of malignant slaves. Day after day passed on, and still saw him devoted to his occupation, (which, servile as it was in itself, was to his eyes ennobled by its lofty end,) until at the expiration of some months, he found himself in possession of a vague and inaccurate fund of information, which he stored up as a priceless treasure in his mind. He next discovered the name and abode of every nobleman in

Rome, suspected even of the most careless attachment to the ancient form of worship. He attended Christian churches, mastered the intricacies of different sects, and estimated the importance of contending schisms; gaining this collection of heterogeneous facts under the combined disadvantages of poverty, solitude, and age; dependent for support on the poorest public charities, and for shelter on the meanest public asylums. Every conclusion that he drew from all he learned, partook of the sanguine character of the fatal self-deception which had embittered his whole life. He believed that the dissensions which he saw raging in the Church would speedily effect the destruction of Christianity itself; that when such a period should arrive, the public mind would require but the guidance of some superior intellect to return to its old religious predilections; and that to lay the foundation for effecting in such a manner the desired revolution, it was necessary for him, — impossible though it might seem, in his present degraded condition, — to gain access to the disaffected nobles of Rome, and discover the secret of acquiring such an influence over them as would enable him to infect them with *his* enthusiasm, and fire them with *his* determination. Greater difficulties even than these had been overcome by other men. Solitary individuals had, ere this, originated revolutions. The gods would favour him; his own cunning would protect him. Yet a little more patience, — a little more determination, and he might still, after all his misfortunes, be assured of success.

It was about this period that he first heard, while pursuing his investigations, of an obscure man who had suddenly arisen to undertake a reformation in the Christian Church; whose declared aim was to rescue the new worship from that very degeneracy, on the fatal progress of which rested all his hopes of triumph. It was reported that this man had been for some time devoted to his reforming labours, but that the difficulties attendant on the task that he had appointed for himself, had hitherto prevented him from attaining all the notoriety essential to the satisfactory prosecution of his plans. On hearing this rumour, Ulpius immediately joined the few who attended the new orator's discourses, and then heard enough to convince him that he listened to the most determined zealot for Christianity in the city of Rome. To gain this man's confidence, to frustrate every effort that he might make in his new vocation, to ruin his credit with his hearers, and to threaten his personal safety by betraying his inmost secrets to his powerful enemies in the Church, were determinations instantly adopted by the Pagan as duties demanded by the exigencies of his creed. From that moment he seized every opportunity of favourably attracting the new reformer's attention to himself, and, as the reader already knows, he was at length rewarded for his cunning and perseverance by being received into the household of the charitable and unsuspecting Numerian, as a pious convert to the Christianity of the early Church.

Once installed under Numerian's roof, the treacher-

ous Pagan saw in the Christian's daughter an instrument admirably adapted, in his unscrupulous hands, for forwarding his wild project of obtaining the ear of a Roman of power and station who was disaffected to the established worship. Among the patricians of whose anti-Christian predilections report had informed him, was Numerian's neighbour, Vetricio the senator. To such a man, renowned for his life of luxury, a girl so beautiful as Antonina would be a bribe rich enough to enable him to extort any promise required, as a reward for betraying her while under the protection of her father's house. In addition to this advantage to be drawn from her ruin, was the certainty that her loss would so affect Numerian, as to render him, for a time at least, incapable of pursuing his labours in the cause of Christianity. Fixed then in his detestable purpose, the ruthless priest patiently awaited the opportunity of commencing his machinations. Nor did he watch in vain. The victim innocently fell into the very trap that he had prepared for her, when she first listened to the music of Vetricio's lute, and permitted her treacherous guardian to become the friend, who concealed her disobedience from her father's ear. After that first fatal step every day brought the projects of Ulpian nearer to success. The long-sought interview with the senator was at length obtained, the engagement imperatively demanded on the one side, was, as we have already related, carelessly accepted on the other; the day that was to bring success to the schemes of the betrayer, and degradation to the honour of the

betrayed, was appointed; and once more the cold heart of the fanatic warmed to the touch of joy. No doubts upon the validity of his engagement with Vetrico ever entered his mind. He never imagined that the powerful senator could with perfect impunity deny him the impracticable assistance he had demanded as his reward, and thrust him as an ignorant madman from his palace gates. Firmly and sincerely he believed that Vetrico was so satisfied with his readiness in pandering to his profligate designs, and so dazzled by the prospect of the glory which would attend success in the great enterprise, that he would gladly hold to the performance of his promise whenever it should be required of him. In the meantime the work was begun. Numerian was, already, through his agency, watched by the spies of a jealous and unscrupulous Church. Feuds, schisms, treacheries, and dissensions, marched bravely onward through the Christian ranks. All things combined to make it certain that the time was near at hand when, through his exertions and the friendly senator's help, the restoration of Paganism might be assured.

With the widest diversity of pursuit and difference of design, there was still a strange and mysterious analogy between the temporary positions of Ulpian and Numerian. One was prepared to be a martyr for the Temple; the other to be a martyr for the Church. Both were enthusiasts in an unwelcome cause; both had suffered more than a life's wonted share of affliction; and both were old — passing irretrievably from

their fading present on earth, to the eternal future awaiting them in the unknown spheres beyond.

But here — with their position — the comparison between them ends. The Christian's principle of action, drawn from the Divinity he served, was love: the Pagan's, born of the superstition that was destroying him, was hate. The one laboured for mankind; the other for himself. And thus, the aspirations of Nume-rian, founded on the general good, nourished by offices of kindness, and nobly directed to a generous end, might lead him into indiscretion, but could never de-grade him into crime — might trouble the serenity of his life, but could never deprive him of the consolation of hope. While, on the contrary, the ambition of Ulpus, originating in revenge and directed to destruc-tion, exacted cruelty from his heart, and duplicity from his mind; and, as the reward for his service, mocked him alternately throughout his whole life with delusion and despair.

CHAPTER VII.

The Bedchamber.

It is now time to resume our chronicle of the eventful night, which marked the destruction of An-tonina's lute and the conspiracy against Antonina's honour.

The gates of Vetrano's palace were closed, and the noises in it were all hushed, the banquet was over, the triumph of the Nightingale Sauce had been achieved,

and the day-break was already glimmering in the eastern sky, when the senator's favoured servant, the freedman Carrio, drew back the shutter of the porter's lodge, where he had been dozing since the conclusion of the feast, and looked out lazily into the street. The dull, faint light of dawn was now strengthening slowly over the lonely roadway and on the walls of the lofty houses. Of the groups of idlers of the lowest class who had assembled during the evening in the street, to snuff the fragrant odours which steamed afar from Vetrano's kitchens, not one remained; men, women, and children had long since departed to seek shelter wherever they could find it, and to fatten their lean bodies on what had been charitably bestowed on them of the coarser relics of the banquet. The mysterious solitude and tranquillity of day-break in a great city prevailed over all things. Nothing impressed, however, by the peculiar and solemn attraction of the scene at this moment, the freedman apostrophised the fresh morning air, as it blew over him, in strong terms of disgust, and even ventured, in lower tones, to rail against his master's uncomfortable fancy for being awakened after a feast at the approach of dawn. Far too well aware, nevertheless, of the necessity of yielding the most implicit obedience to the commands he had received, to resign himself any longer to the pleasant temptations of repose, Carrio, after yawning, rubbing his eyes, and indulging for a few moments more in the luxury of complaint, set forth in earnest to follow the corridors leading to the interior of

the palace, and to awaken Vetricio without further delay.

He had not advanced more than a few steps, when a proclamation, written in letters of gold on a blue-coloured board, and hung against the wall at his side, attracted his attention. This public notice, which delayed his progress at the very outset, and which was intended for the special edification of all the inhabitants of Rome, was thus expressed: —

“ON THIS DAY, AND FOR TEN DAYS FOLLOWING, THE AFFAIRS OF OUR PATRON OBLIGE HIM TO BE ABSENT FROM ROME.”

Here the proclamation ended, without descending to particulars. It had been put forth, in accordance with the easy fashion of the age, to answer at once all applications at Vetricio's palace during the senator's absence. Although the colouring of the board, the writing of the letters, and the composition of the sentence were the work of his own ingenuity, the worthy Carrio could not prevail upon himself to pass the proclamation without contemplating its magnificence anew. For some time he stood regarding it with the same expression of lofty and complacent approbation which we see, in these modern days, illuminating the countenance of a connoisseur before one of his own old pictures, which he has bought as a great bargain; or dawning over the bland features of a linendraper, as he surveys from the pavement his morning's arrangement of the window of the shop. All things, however, have their limits, even a man's ap-

proval of an effort of his own skill. Accordingly, after a prolonged review of the proclamation, some faint ideas of the necessity of immediately obeying his master's commands revived in the mind of the judicious Carrio, and counselled him to turn his steps at once in the direction of the palace sleeping-apartments.

Greatly wondering what new caprice had induced the senator to contemplate leaving Rome at the dawn of day — for Vetricio had divulged to no one the object of his departure — the freedman cautiously entered his master's bedchamber. He drew aside the ample silken curtains suspended around and over the sleeping couch, from the hands of Graces and Cupids sculptured in marble; but the statues surrounded an empty bed. Vetricio was not there. Carrio next entered the bath-room; the perfumed water was steaming in its long marble basin; the soft wrapping-cloths lay ready for use; the attendant slave, with his instruments of ablution, waited, half asleep, in his accustomed place; but here also no signs of the master's presence appeared. Somewhat perplexed, the freedman examined several other apartments. He found guests, dancing girls, parasites, poets, painters — a motley crew — occupying every kind of dormitory, and all peacefully engaged in sleeping off the effects of the wine they had drunk at the banquet; but the great object of his search still eluded him as before. At last it occurred to him that the senator, in an excess of convivial enthusiasm and jovial hospitality,

might yet be detaining some favoured guest at the table of the feast.

Pausing, therefore, at some carved doors which stood ajar at one extremity of a spacious hall, he pushed them open, and hurriedly entered the banquet-room beyond.

A soft, dim, luxurious light reigned over this apartment, which now presented, as far as the eye could discern, an aspect of confusion that was at once graceful and picturesque. Of the various lamps, of every variety of pattern, hanging from the ceiling, but few remained alight. From those, however, which were still unextinguished there shone a mild brightness, admirably adapted to display the objects immediately around them. The golden garlands, and the alabaster pots of sweet ointment, which had been suspended before the guests during the banquet, still hung from the painted ceiling. On the massive table, composed partly of ebony and partly of silver, yet lay in the wildest confusion fragments of gastronomic delicacies, grotesque dinner-services, vases of flowers, musical instruments, and crystal dice; while towering over all rose the glittering dish which had contained the nightingales consumed by the feasters, with the four golden Cupids, which had spouted over them that illustrious invention — the Nightingale Sauce. Around the couches, of violet and rose colour, ranged along the table, the perfumed and gaily-tinted powders that had been strewn in patterns over the marble floor were

perceptible for a few yards; but beyond this point nothing more was plainly distinguishable. The eye roved down the sides of the glorious chamber, catching dim glimpses of gorgeous draperies, crowded statues, and marble columns, but discerning nothing accurately, until it reached the half-opened windows, and rested upon the fresh dewy verdure, now faintly visible in the shady gardens without. There — waving in the morning breezes, charged on every leaf with their burden of pure and welcome moisture — rose the lofty pine trees, basking in the recurrence of the new day's beautiful and undying youth, and rising in reproving contrast before the exhausted allurements of luxury and the perverted creations of art, which burdened the tables of the hall within.

After a hasty survey of the apartment, the freed-man appeared to be on the point of quitting it in despair, when the noise of a falling dish, followed by several partly suppressed and wholly confused exclamations of affright, caught his ear. He once more approached the banqueting table, retrimmed a lamp that hung near him, and taking it in his hand passed to the side of the room whence the disturbance proceeded. A hideous little negro, staring in ludicrous terror at a silver oven, half filled with bread, which had just fallen beside him, was the first object he discovered. A few paces beyond the negro reposed a beautiful boy, crowned with vine leaves and ivy, still sleeping by the side of his lyre; and further yet, stretched in an uneasy slumber on a silken couch, lay

the identical object of the freedman's search — the illustrious author of the Nightingale Sauce.

Immediately above the sleeping senator hung his portrait, in which he was modestly represented as rising by the assistance of Minerva to the top of Parnassus, the nine Muses standing round him rejoicing. At his feet reposed a magnificent white cat, whose head rested in all the luxurious laziness of satiety on the edge of a golden saucer, half filled with dormice stewed in milk. The most indubitable evidences of the night's debauch appeared in Vetricio's disordered dress and flushed countenance, as the freedman regarded him. For some minutes the worthy Carrio stood uncertain whether to awaken his master or not, deciding finally, however, on obeying the commands he had received, and disturbing the slumbers of the wearied voluptuary before him. To effect this purpose, it was necessary to call in the aid of the singing-boy; for by a refinement of luxury, Vetricio had forbidden his attendants to awaken him by any other method than the agency of musical sounds.

With some difficulty the boy was sufficiently aroused to comprehend the service that was required of him. For a short time the notes of the lyre sounded in vain. At last, when the melody took a louder and more martial character, the sleeping patrician slowly opened his eyes, and stared vacantly around him.

"My respected patron" — said the polite Carrio, in apologetic tones — "commanded that I should

awaken him with the dawn; the daybreak has already appeared."

When the freedman had ceased speaking, Vetrico sat up on the couch, called for a basin of water, dipped his fingers in the refreshing liquid, dried them abstractedly on the long silky curls of the singing boy who stood beside him, gazed about him once more, repeated interrogatively the word "Daybreak," and sunk gently back upon his couch. We are grieved to confess it — but the author of the Nightingale Sauce was moderately inebriated.

A short pause followed, during which the freedman and the singing boy stared upon each other in mutual perplexity. At length the one resumed his address of apology, and the other his efforts on the lyre. Once more, after an interval, the eyes of Vetrico lazily unclosed, and this time he began to speak; but his thoughts — if thoughts they could be called — were as yet wholly occupied by the "table-talk" at the past night's banquet.

"The ancient Egyptians — oh, sprightly and enchanting Camilla, — were a wise nation!" murmured the senator drowsily. "I am myself descended from the ancient Egyptians; and, therefore, I hold in high veneration that cat in your lap, and all cats besides. Herodotus — an historian whose works I feel a certain gratification in publicly mentioning as good — informs us, that when a cat died in the dwelling of an ancient Egyptian, the owner shaved his eyebrows as a mark of grief, embalmed the defunct animal

in a consecrated house, and carried it to be interred in a considerable city of Lower Egypt, called 'Bubastis' — an Egyptian word which I have discovered to mean The Sepulchre of all the Cats; whence it is scarcely erroneous to infer —"

At this point the speaker's power of recollection and articulation suddenly failed him, and Carrio — who had listened with perfect gravity to his master's oration upon cats — took immediate advantage of the opportunity now afforded him to speak again.

"The equipage which my patron was pleased to command to carry him to Aricia," said he, with a strong emphasis on the last word, "now stands in readiness at the private gate of the palace gardens."

As he heard the word "Aricia," the senator's powers of recollection and perception seemed suddenly to return to him. Among that high order of drinkers who can imbibe to the point of perfect enjoyment, and stop short scientifically before the point of perfect oblivion, Vetrano occupied an exalted rank. The wine he had swallowed during the night had disordered his memory and slightly troubled his self-possession, but had not deprived him of his understanding. There was nothing plebeian even in his debauchery; there was an art and a refinement in his very excesses.

"Aricia — Aricia," he repeated to himself, "ah, the villa that Julia lent to me at Ravenna! The pleasures of the table must have obscured for a moment the image of my beautiful pupil of other days,

which now revives before me again, as Love resumes the dominion that Bacchus usurped! My excellent Carrio," he continued, speaking to the freedman, "you have done perfectly right in awakening me; delay not a moment more in ordering my bath to be prepared, or my man-monster Ulpius, the king of conspirators and high priest of all that is mysterious, will wait for me in vain! And you, Glyco," he pursued, when Carrio had departed, addressing the singing boy, "array yourself for a journey, and wait with my equipage at the garden gate. I shall require you to accompany me in my expedition to Aricia. But first, oh, gifted and valued songster, let me reward you for the harmonious symphony that has just awakened me. Of what rank of my musicians are you at present, Glyco?"

"Of the fifth," replied the boy.

"Were you bought, or born in my house?" asked Vetrano.

"Neither; but bequeathed to you by Geta's testament," rejoined the gratified Glyco.

"I advance you," continued Vetrano, "to the privileges and the pay of the first rank of my musicians; and I give you, as a proof of my continued favour, this ring. In return for these obligations, I desire you to keep secret whatever concerns my approaching expedition; to employ your softest music in soothing the ear of a young girl who will accompany us — in calming her terrors if she is afraid, in drying her tears if she weeps; and finally, to exercise your voice and your lute incessantly, in uniting the name 'Antonina'

to the sweetest harmonies of sound that your imagination can suggest."

Pronouncing these words with an easy and benevolent smile, and looking round complacently on the display of luxurious confusion about him, Vetricio retired to the bath that was to prepare him for his approaching triumph.

Meanwhile a scene of a very different nature was proceeding without, at Numerian's garden-gate. Here were no singing boys, no freedmen, no profusion of rich treasures, — here appeared only the solitary and deformed figure of Ulpian, half-hidden among surrounding trees, while he waited at his appointed post. As time wore on, and still Vetricio did not appear, the Pagan's self-possession began to desert him. He moved restlessly backwards and forwards over the soft dewy grass, sometimes in low tones calling upon his gods to hasten the tardy footsteps of the libertine patrician, who was to be made the instrument of restoring to the Temple the worship of other days, — sometimes cursing the reckless delay of the senator, or exulting in the treachery by which he madly believed his ambition was at last to be fulfilled; but still, whatever his words or thoughts, wrought up to the same pitch of fierce, fanatic enthusiasm which had strengthened him for the defence of his idols at Alexandria, and had nerved him against the torment and misery of years, in his slavery in the copper mines of Spain.

The precious moments were speeding irrevocably

onwards. His impatience was rapidly changing to rage and despair, as he strained his eyes for the last time in the direction of the palace gardens, and now at length discerned a white robe among the distant trees. Vetrico was rapidly approaching him.

Restored by his bath, no effect of the night's festivity but its exhilaration remained in the senator's brain. But for a slight uncertainty in his gait, and an unusual vacancy in his smile, the elegant gastronome might now have appeared to the closest observer guiltless of the influence of intoxicating drinks. He advanced radiant with exultation, prepared for conquest, to the place where Ulpian awaited him, and was about to address the Pagan with that satirical familiarity so fashionable among the nobles of Rome in their communications with the people, when the object of his intended pleasantries sternly interrupted him, saying, in tones more of command than of advice, "Be silent! If you would succeed in your purpose, follow me without uttering a word!"

There was something so fierce and determined in the tones of the old man's voice — low, tremulous and husky though they were — as he uttered those words, that the bold, confident senator instinctively held his peace as he followed his stern guide into Numerian's house. Avoiding the regular entrance, which at that early hour of the morning was necessarily closed, Ulpian conducted the patrician through a small wicket into the subterranean apartment, or rather outhouse, which was

his customary, though comfortless, retreat in his leisure hours, and which was hardly ever entered by the other members of the Christian's household.

From the low, arched, brick ceiling of this place, hung one earthenware lamp, whose light, small and tremulous, left all the corners of the apartment in perfect obscurity. The thick buttresses that projected inwards from the walls, made visible by their prominence, displayed on their surfaces rude representations of idols and temples drawn in chalk and covered with strange, mysterious hieroglyphics. On a block of stone which served as a table lay some fragments of small statues, which Vetrico recognised as having belonged to the old, accredited representations of Pagan idols. Over the sides of the table itself were scrawled in Latin characters these two words, "Serapis," "Macrinus," and about its base lay some pieces of torn, soiled linen, which still retained enough of their former character both in shape, size, and colour, to convince Vetrico that they had once served as the vestments of a Pagan priest. Further than this the senator's observation did not carry him, for the close, almost mephitic atmosphere of the place already began to affect him unfavourably. He felt a suffocating sensation in his throat, and a dizziness in his head. The restorative influence of his recent bath declined rapidly. The fumes of the wine he had drunk in the night, far from having been, as he imagined permanently dispersed, again mounted to his head. He was obliged to lean against the stone table to preserve his equilibrium, as he faintly desired

the Pagan to shorten their sojourn in his miserable retreat.

Without even noticing the senator's request, Ulpius hurriedly proceeded to erase the drawings on the butresses and the inscriptions on the table. Then collecting the fragments of statues and the pieces of linen, he deposited them in a hiding-place in the corner of the apartment. This done, he returned to the stone against which Vetricio supported himself, and for a few minutes silently regarded the senator with a firm, earnest and penetrating gaze.

A dark suspicion that he had betrayed himself into the hands of a villain, who was then plotting some atrocious project connected with his safety or honour, began to rise on the senator's bewildered brain, as he unwillingly submitted to the penetrating examination of the Pagan's glance. At that moment, however, the withered lips of the old man slowly parted, and he began to speak. Whether as he looked on Vetricio's disturbed countenance, and marked his unsteady gait, the heart of Ulpius, for the first time since his introduction to the senator, misgave him when he thought of their monstrous engagement; or whether the near approach of the moment that was henceforth, as he wildly imagined, to fix Vetricio as his assistant and ally, so powerfully affected his mind that it instinctively sought to vent its agitation through the natural medium of words, it is useless to enquire. Whatever his motives for speech, the impressive earnestness of his manner

gave evidence of the depth and intensity of his emotions, as he addressed the senator thus: —

“I have submitted to servitude in a Christian’s house, I have suffered the contamination of a Christian’s prayers, to gain the use of your power and station when the time to employ them should arrive. The hour has now come when *my* part of the conditions of our engagement is to be performed, the hour will yet come when *your* part shall be exacted from *you* in turn! Do you wonder at what I have done and what I will do? Do you marvel that a household drudge should speak thus to a nobleman of Rome? Are you astonished that I risk so much as to venture on enlisting *you* — by the sacrifice of the girl who now slumbers above — in the cause, whose end is the restoration of our fathers’ gods, and in whose service I have suffered and grown old? Listen, and you shall hear from what I am fallen — you shall know what I once was!”

“I adjure you by all the gods and goddesses of our ancient worship, let me hear you where I can breathe — in the garden, on the house-top, anywhere but in this dungeon!” — murmured the senator in entreating accents.

“My birth, my parents, my education, my ancient abode — these I will not disclose,” interrupted the Pagan, raising one arm authoritatively, as if to obstruct Vetricio from approaching the door, “I have sworn by my gods, that until the day of restitution these secrets of my past life shall remain unrevealed to stranger’s ears. Unknown, I entered Rome, and un-

known I will labour in Rome until the projects I have lived for are crowned with success! It is enough that I confess to you that with those sacred images, whose fragments you have just beheld, I was once lodged; that those sacred vestments whose remains you discerned at your feet, I once wore. To attain the glories of the Priesthood there was nothing that I did not resign, to preserve them there was nothing I did not perform, to recover them there is nothing that I will not attempt! I was once illustrious, prosperous, beloved; of my glory, my happiness, my popularity, the Christians have robbed me; and I will yet live to requite it heavily at their hands! I had a guardian who loved me in my youth, the Christians murdered him! A Temple was under the rule of my manhood, the Christians destroyed it! The people of a whole nation once listened to my voice, the Christians have dispersed them! The wise, the great, the beautiful, the good, were once devoted to me, the Christians have made me a stranger at their doors, an outcast of their affections and thoughts! For all this shall I take no vengeance! Shall I not plot to rebuild my ruined Temple, and win back, in my age, the honours that adorned me in my youth!"

"Assuredly! — at once — without delay!" stammered Vetricio, returning the stern and inquiring gaze of the Pagan with a bewildered uneasy stare.

"To mount over the bodies of the Christian slain," continued the old man, his sinister eyes dilating in anticipated triumph as he whispered close at the senator's ear, "to rebuild the altars that the Christians have

overthrown, is the ambition that has made light to me the sufferings of my whole life. I have battled, and it has sustained me in the midst of carnage; I have wandered, and it has been my home in the desert; I have failed, and it has supported me; I have been threatened with death, and it has preserved me from fear; I have been cast into slavery, and it has made my fetters light. You see me now, old, degraded, lonely — believe that I long neither for wife, children, tranquillity, nor possessions; that I desire no companion but my cherished and exalted purpose! Remember then, in the hour of performance, the promise you have now made to aid me in the achievement of that purpose! Remember that you are a Pagan yourself! Feast, laugh, carouse with your compeers, be still the airy jester, the gay companion; but never forget the end to which you are vowed — the destiny of glory that the restoration of our deities has in store for us both!”

He ceased. Though his voice while he spoke never rose beyond a hoarse, monotonous, half-whispering tone, all the ferocity of his abused and degraded nature was for the instant thoroughly aroused by his recapitulation of his wrongs. Had Vetricio at this moment shown any symptoms of indecision, or spoken any words of discouragement, he would have murdered him on the spot where they stood. Every feature in the Pagan's seared and livid countenance expressed the stormy emotions that were rushing over his heart as he now confronted his bewildered, yet attentive listener. His firm, menacing position; his poor and scanty garments;

his wild shaggy hair; his crooked, distorted form; his stern, solemn, unwavering gaze; opposed as they were (under the fitful illumination of the expiring lamp and the advancing daylight) to the unsteady gait, the vacant countenance, the rich robes, the youthful grace of form and delicacy of feature of the object of his steady contemplation, made so wild and strange a contrast between his patrician ally and himself, that they scarcely looked like beings of the same race. Nothing could be more immense than the difference — more wild than the incongruity between them. It was sickness hand-in-hand with health; pain marshalled face to face with enjoyment; darkness ranged in monstrous discordance by the very side of light.

The next instant, — just as the astonished senator was endeavouring to frame a suitable answer to the solemn adjuration that had been addressed to him — Ulpus seized his arm; and, opening a door at the inner extremity of the apartment, led him up some stairs that conducted to the interior of the house.

They passed the hall, on the floor of which still lay the fragments of the broken lute, dimly distinguishable in the soft light of daybreak; and ascending another staircase, paused at a little door at the top, which Ulpus cautiously opened; and in a moment afterwards Vetranio was admitted into Antonina's bed-chamber.

The room was of no great extent; its scanty furniture was of the most ordinary description; no ornaments glittered on its walls; no frescos adorned its

ceiling; and yet there was a simple elegance in its appearance, an unobtrusive propriety in its minutest details, which made it at once interesting and attractive to the eye. From the white curtains at the window to the vase of flowers standing by the bedside, the same natural refinement of taste appeared in the arrangement of all that the apartment contained. No sound broke the deep silence of the place save the low, soft breathing, occasionally interrupted by a long, trembling sigh, of its sleeping occupant. The sole light in the room consisted of a little lamp so placed in the middle of the flowers round the sides of the vase, that no extended or steady illumination was cast upon any object. There was something in the decent propriety of all that was visible in the bedchamber; in the soft obscurity of its atmosphere; in the gentle and musical sound that alone interrupted its magical stillness, impressive enough, it might have been imagined, to have awakened some hesitation in the bosom of the boldest libertine, ere he deliberately proceeded to intrude on the unprotected slumbers of its occupant. No such feeling of indecision, however, troubled the thoughts of Vetricio as he cast a rapid glance round the apartment which he had ventured so treacherously to invade. The fumes of the wine he had imbibed at the banquet, had been so thoroughly resuscitated by the oppressive atmosphere of the subterranean retreat he had just quitted, as to have left him nothing of his more refined nature. All that was honourable or intellectual in his character had now completely ceded

to all that was base and animal. He looked round, and perceiving that Ulpian had silently quitted him, softly closed the door. Then advancing to the bedside with the utmost caution compatible with the involuntary unsteadiness of an intoxicated man, he took the lamp from the vase in which it was half concealed, and earnestly surveyed by its light the figure of the sleeping girl.

The head of Antonina was thrown back and rested rather over than on her pillow. Her light linen dress had become so disordered during the night that it displayed her throat and part of her bosom, in all the dawning beauties of their youthful formation, to the gaze of the licentious Roman. One hand half supported her head, and was almost entirely hidden in the locks of her long black hair, which had escaped from the white cincture intended to confine it, and now streamed over the pillow in dazzling contrast to the light bed-furniture around it. The other hand held tightly clasped to her bosom the precious fragment of her broken lute. The deep repose expressed in her position had not thoroughly communicated itself to her face. Now and then her slightly parted lips moved and trembled, and ever and anon a change, so faint and fugitive that it was hardly perceptible appeared in her complexion, breathing on the soft olive that was its natural hue, the light rosy flush which the emotions of the past night had impressed on it ere she slept. Her position, in its voluptuous negligence, seemed the very type of Oriental loveliness, while her face, calm

and sorrowful in its expression, displayed the more refined and sober graces of the European model. And thus these two characteristics of two different orders of beauty, appearing conjointly under one form, produced a whole so various and yet so harmonious, so impressive and yet so attractive, that the senator, as he bent over the couch, though the warm, soft breath of the young girl played on his cheeks, and waved the tips of his perfumed locks, could hardly imagine that the scene before him was more than a bright, delusive dream.

While Vetranio was yet absorbed in admiration of her charms, Antonina's form slightly moved, as if agitated by the influence of a passing dream. The change thus accomplished in her position, broke the spell that its former stillness and beauty had unconsciously wrought to restrain the unhallowed ardour of the profligate Roman. He now passed his arm round her warm, slender figure; and gently raising her till her head rested on his shoulder as he sat by the bed, imprinted kiss after kiss on the pure lips that sleep had innocently abandoned to him.

As he had foreseen, Antonina instantly awoke; but to his unmeasured astonishment neither started nor shrieked. The moment she had opened her eyes she had recognised the person of Vetranio; and that overwhelming terror which suspends in its victims the use of every faculty, whether of the body or the mind, had immediately possessed itself of her heart. Too innocent to imagine the real motive that prompted the

senator's intrusion on her slumbers, where others of her sex would have foreboded dishonour, *she* feared death. All her father's vague denunciations against the enormities of the nobles of Rome, rushed in an instant over her mind, and her childish imagination pictured Vetranio as armed with some terrible and mysterious vengeance to be wreaked on her for having avoided all communication with him, as soon as she had gained possession of her lute. Prostrate beneath the petrifying influence of her fears, motionless and powerless before him as its prey before the serpent, she made no effort to move or speak; but looked up stedfastly into the senator's face, her large eyes fixed and dilated in a gaze of overpowering terror.

Intoxicated though he was, the affrighted expression of the poor girl's pale, rigid countenance, did not escape Vetranio's notice; and he taxed his bewildered brain for such soothing and reassuring expressions as would enable him to introduce his profligate proposals with some chance that they would be listened to and understood.

"Dearest pupil! Most beautiful of Roman maidens," he began in the husky, monotonous tones of inebriety, "abandon your fears! I come hither, wafted by the breath of love, to restore the worship of the — I would say to bear you on my bosom to a villa — the name of which has for the moment escaped my remembrance. You cannot have forgotten that it was I who taught you to compose the Nightingale Sauce — or, no — let me rather say to play upon the lute. Love, music,

pleasure, all await you in the arms of your attached Vetrano. Your eloquent silence speaks encouragement to my heart. Beloved Anto ——”

Here the senator suddenly paused, for the eyes of the girl which had hitherto been fixed on him with the same expression of blank dismay that had characterised them from the first, slowly moved in the direction of the door. The instant afterwards, a slight noise caught Vetrano's ear, and Antonina shuddered so violently as he pressed her to his side, that he felt it through his whole frame. Slowly and unwillingly he withdrew his gaze from the pale, yet lovely countenance on which it had been fixed, and looked up.

At the open door, pale, silent, motionless, stood the master of the house.

Incapable from the confusion of his ideas of any other feeling than the animal instinct of self-defence, Vetrano no sooner beheld Numerian's figure, than he rose, and drawing a small dagger from his bosom attempted to advance on the intruder. He found himself, however, restrained by Antonina, who had fallen on her knees before him, and grasped his robe with a strength which seemed utterly incompatible with the slenderness of her form and the feebleness of her sex and age.

The first voice that broke the silence which ensued was Numerian's. He advanced, his face ghastly with anguish, his lip quivering with suppressed emotions, to the senator's side, and addressed him thus: —

"Put up your weapon, I come but to ask a favour at your hands."

Vetranio mechanically obeyed him. There was something in the stern calmness, frightful at such a moment, of the Christian's manner that awed him in spite of himself.

"The favour I would petition for," continued Numerian, in low, steady, bitter tones, "is that you would remove your harlot there, to your own abode. Here, are no singing boys, no banqueting halls, no perfumed couches. The retreat of a solitary old man is no place for such an one as she. I beseech you remove her to a more congenial home. She is well fitted for her trade, her mother was a harlot before her!"

He laughed scornfully, and pointed as he spoke to the figure of the unhappy girl kneeling with outstretched arms at his feet.

"Father, father!" she cried, in accents bereft of their native softness and melody, "have you forgotten me?"

"I know you not!" he replied, thrusting her from him — "Return to *his* bosom, you shall never more be pressed to *mine*. Go to *his* palace, *my* house is yours no longer! You are *his* harlot, not *my* daughter! I command you — go!"

As he advanced towards her with fierce glance and threatening demeanour, she suddenly rose up. Her reason seemed crushed within her, as she looked with frantic earnestness from Vetranio to her father, and then back again from her father to Vetranio. On one side she saw an enemy who had ruined her she

knew not how, and who threatened her with she knew not what; on the other a parent who had cast her off. For one instant she directed a final look on the room, that, sad and lonely though it was, had still been a home to her; and then without a word or a sigh she turned, and crouching like a beaten dog, fled from the house.

During the whole of the scene Vetricio had stood so fixed in the helpless astonishment of intoxication, as to be incapable of moving or uttering a word. All that took place during the short and terrible interview between father and child, utterly perplexed him. He heard no loud, violent anger on one side, no clamorous petitioning for forgiveness on the other. The stern old man whom Antonina had called father, and who had been pointed out to him as the most austere Christian in Rome, far from avenging his intrusion on Antonina's slumber, had voluntarily abandoned his daughter to his licentious will. That the anger or irony of so severe a man should inspire such an action as this, or that Numerian, like his servant, was plotting to obtain some strange mysterious favour from him by using Antonina as a bribe, seemed perfectly impossible. All that passed before the senator was, to his bewildered imagination, thoroughly incomprehensible. Frivolous, thoughtless, profligate as he might be, his nature was not radically base, and when the scene of which he had been the astounded witness was abruptly terminated by the flight of Antonina, the look of frantic misery fixed on him by the unfortunate girl at

the moment of her departure, almost sobered him for the instant, as he stood before the now solitary father gazing vacantly around him with emotions of uncontrollable confusion and dismay.

Meanwhile a third person was now approaching to join the two occupants of the bedchamber abandoned by its ill-fated mistress. Although in the subterranean retreat to which he had retired on leaving Vetricio, Ulpian had not noticed the silent entrance of the master of the house, he had heard through the open doors the sound, low though it was, of the Christian's voice. As he rose, suspecting all things and prepared for every emergency, to ascend to the bedchamber, he saw, while he mounted the lowest range of stairs, a figure in white pass rapidly through the hall and disappear by the principal entrance of the house. He hesitated for an instant and looked after it, but the fugitive figure had passed so swiftly in the uncertain light of early morning that he was unable to identify it, and he determined to ascertain the progress of events, now that Numerian must have discovered a portion at least of the plot against his daughter and himself, by ascending immediately to Antonina's apartment, whatever might be the consequences of his intrusion at such an hour on her father's wrath.

As soon as the Pagan appeared before him, a sensible change took place in Vetricio. The presence of Ulpian in the chamber was a positive relief to the senator's perturbed faculties, after the mysterious, overpowering influence that the moral command expressed

in the mere presence of the father and the master of the house, at such an hour, had exercised over them. Over Ulpus he had an absolute right, Ulpus was his dependant; and he determined, therefore, to extort from the servant whom he despised an explanation of the mysteries in the conduct of the master whom he feared, and the daughter whom he began to doubt.

“Where is Antonina?” he cried, starting as if from a trance, and advancing fiercely towards the treacherous Pagan. “She has left the room — she must have taken refuge with you.”

With a slow and penetrating gaze Ulpus looked round the apartment. A faint agitation was perceptible in his livid countenance, but he uttered not a word.

The senator's face became pale and red with alternate emotions of apprehension and rage. He seized the Pagan by the throat, his eyes sparkled, his blood boiled, he began to suspect even then that Antonina was lost to him for ever.

“I ask you again where is she?” he shouted in a voice of fury. “If through this night's work she is lost or harmed, I will revenge it on *you*. Is this the performance of your promise? Do you think that I will direct your desired restoration of the gods of old for this? If evil comes to Antonina through your treachery, sooner than assist you in your secret projects, I would see you and your accursed deities all burning together in the Christians' hell! Where is the girl, you slave? Villain, where was your vigilance,

when you let that man surprise us at our first interview?"

He turned towards Numerian as he spoke. Trouble and emergency gift the faculties with a more than mortal penetration. Every word that he had uttered had eaten its burning way into the father's heart. Hours of narrative could not have convinced him how fatally he had been deceived, more thoroughly than the few hasty expressions he had just heard. No word passed his lips — no action betrayed his misery. He stood before the spoilers of his home, changed in an instant from the courageous enthusiast to the feeble, helpless, heart-broken man.

Though all the ferocity of his old Roman blood had been roused in Vetrico, as he threatened Ulpian, the father's look of cold, silent, frightful despair froze it in his young veins in an instant. His heart was still the impressible heart of youth; and, struck for the first time in his life with emotions of horror and remorse, he advanced a step to offer such explanation and atonement as he best might, when the voice of Ulpian suspended his intentions, and made him pause to listen.

"She passed me in the hall," muttered the Pagan, doggedly. "I did *my* part in betraying her into your power — it was for *you* to hinder her in her flight. Why did you not strike him to the earth," he continued, pointing with a mocking smile to Numerian, "when he surprised you? You are wealthy and a

noble of Rome; murder would have been no crime in you!"

"Stand back!" cried the senator, thrusting him from the position he had hitherto occupied in the door-way. "She may be recovered even yet! All Rome shall be searched for her!"

The next instant he disappeared from the room, and the master and servant were left together alone.

The silence that now reigned in the apartment was broken by distant sounds of uproar and confusion in the streets of the city beneath. These ominous noises had arisen with the dawn of day, but the different emotions of the occupants of Numerian's abode had so engrossed them, that the turmoil in the outer world had passed unheeded by all. No sooner, however, had Vetricio departed than it caught the attention of Ulpian, and he advanced to the window. What he there saw and heard was of no ordinary importance, for it at once fixed him to the spot where he stood in mute and ungovernable surprise.

While Ulpian was occupied at the window, Numerian had staggered to the side of the bed which his ill-timed severity had made vacant, perhaps for ever. The power of action, the capacity to go forth and seek his child himself, was entirely suspended in the agony of her loss, as the miserable man fell on his knees, and in the anguish of his heart endeavoured to find solace in prayer. In the positions they severally occupied the servant and the master long remained — the betrayer watching at the window, the betrayed

mourning at his lost daughter's bed — both alike silent, both alike unconscious of the lapse of time.

At length, apparently unaware at first that he was not alone in the room, Numerian spoke. In his low, broken, tremulous accents, none of his adherents would have recognised the voice of the eloquent preacher — the bold chastiser of the vices of the Church. The whole nature of the man — moral, intellectual, physical — seemed fatally and completely changed.

"She was innocent, she was innocent!" he whispered to himself. "And even had she been guilty, was it for me to drive her from my doors! My part, like my Redeemer's, was to teach repentance, and to show mercy! Accursed be the pride and anger that drove justice and patience from my heart, when I beheld her, as I thought, submitting herself without a struggle or a cry, to my dishonour, and hers! Could I not have imagined her terror, could I not have remembered her purity? Alas, my beloved, if I myself have been the dupe of the wicked, what marvel is it that you should have been betrayed as well! And I have driven you from me, you, from whose mouth no word of anger ever dropped! I have thrust you from my bosom, you, who were the adornment of my age! My death approaches, and you will not be by to pardon my heavy offence, to close my weary eyes, to mourn by my solitary tomb! God — oh God! If I am left thus lonely on the earth, thou hast punished me beyond what I can bear!"

He paused — his emotions for the instant bereft

him of speech. After an interval, he muttered to himself in a low, moaning voice — “I called her harlot! My pure, innocent child! I called her harlot — I called her harlot!”

In a paroxysm of despair, he started up and looked distractedly around him. Ulpius still stood motionless at the window. At the sight of the ruthless Pagan he trembled in every limb. All those infirmities of age that had been hitherto spared him, seemed to overwhelm him in an instant. He feebly advanced to his betrayer's side, and addressed him thus: —

“I have lodged you, taught you, cared for you; I have never intruded on your secrets, never doubted your word, and for all this, you have repaid me by plotting against my daughter and deceiving me! If your end was to harm me by assailing my child's happiness and honour you have succeeded! If you would banish me from Rome, if you would plunge me into obscurity, to serve some mysterious ambition of your own, you may dispose of me as you will! I bow before the terrible power of your treachery! I will renounce whatever you command, if you will restore me to my child! I am helpless and miserable; I have neither heart nor strength to seek her myself! You, who know all things and can dare all dangers, may restore her to pardon and bless me, if you will! Remember, whoever you really are, that *you* were once helpless and alone, and that you are still old, like me! Remember that I have promised to abandon to you whatever you desire! Remember that no woman's voice

can cheer me, no woman's heart feel for me, now that I am old and lonely, but my daughter's! I have guessed from the words of the nobleman whom you serve, what are the designs you cherish and the faith you profess; I will neither betray the one nor assault the other! I thought that my labours for the Church were more to me than anything on earth, but now, that through my fault, my daughter is driven from her father's roof, I know that she is dearer to me than the greatest of my designs; I must gain her pardon; I must win back her affection before I die! You are powerful and can recover her! Ulpus! Ulpus!"

As he spoke, the Christian knelt at the Pagan's feet. It was terrible to see the man of affection and integrity thus humbled before the man of heartlessness and crime.

Ulpus turned to behold him, then without a word he raised him from the ground, and thrusting him to the window, pointed with flashing eyes to the wide view without.

The sun had arisen high in the heaven and beamed in dazzling brilliancy over Rome and the suburbs. A vague, fearful, mysterious desolation seemed to have suddenly overwhelmed the whole range of dwellings beyond the walls. No sounds rose from the gardens, no population idled in the streets. The ramparts on the other hand were crowded at every visible point with people of all ranks, and the distant squares and amphitheatres of the city itself, swarmed like ant-hills to the eye with the crowds that struggled within them.

Confused cries and strange wild noises rose at all points from these masses of human beings. The whole of Rome seemed the prey of a vast and universal revolt.

Extraordinary and affrighting as was the scene at the moment when he beheld it, it passed unheeded before the eyes of the scarce conscious father. He was blind to all sights but his daughter's form, deaf to all sounds but her voice; and he murmured as he looked vacantly forth upon the wild view before him, "Where is my child! — where is my child!"

"What is your child to *me*? What are the fortunes or affections of man or woman, at such an hour as this?" cried the Pagan, as he stood by Numerian, with features horribly animated by the emotions of fierce delight and triumph that were raging within him at the prospect he beheld. "Dotard, look from this window! Listen to those voices! The gods whom I serve, the gods whom you and your worship would fain have destroyed, have risen to avenge themselves at last! Behold those suburbs, they are left desolate! Hear those cries — they are from Roman lips! While your household's puny troubles have run their course, this city of apostates has been doomed! In the world's annals this morning will never be forgotten! **THE GOTH'S ARE AT THE GATES OF ROME!**"

CHAPTER VIII.

The Goths.

It was no false rumour that had driven the populace of the suburbs to fly to the security of the city walls. It was no ill-founded cry of terror that struck the ear of Ulpian, as he stood at Numerian's window. The name of Rome had really lost its pristine terrors; the walls of Rome, those walls which had morally guarded the Empire by their renown, as they had actually guarded its capital by their strength, were deprived at length of their ancient inviolability. An army of barbarians had indeed penetrated for conquest and for vengeance to the City of the World! The achievement which the invasions of six hundred years had hitherto attempted in vain, was now accomplished, and accomplished by the men whose forefathers had once fled like hunted beasts to their native fastnesses, before the legions of the Cæsars — "The Goths were at the gates of Rome!"

And now, as his warriors encamped around him, as he saw the arrayed hosts whom his summons had gathered together, and his energy led on, threatening at their doors the corrupt senate who had deceived, and the boastful populace who had despised him, what emotions stirred within the heart of Alaric! As the words of martial command fell from his lips, and his eyes watched the movements of the multitudes around him, what exalted aspirations, what daring resolves, grew and strengthened in the mind of the man who

was the pioneer of that mighty revolution, which swept from one quarter of the world the sway, the civilisation, the very life and spirit of centuries of ancient rule! High thoughts gathered fast in his mind; a daring ambition expanded within him — the ambition, not of the barbarian plunderer, but of the avenger who had come to punish; not of the warrior who combated for combat's sake, but of the hero who was vowed to conquer and to sway. From the far-distant days when Odin was driven from his territories by the Romans, to the night polluted by the massacre of the hostages in Aquileia, the hour of just and terrible retribution for Gothic wrongs had been delayed through the weary lapse of years, and the warning convulsion of bitter strifes, to approach at last under *him*. He looked on the towering walls before him, the only invader since Hannibal by whom they had been beheld; and he felt as he looked, that his new aspirations did not deceive him, that his dreams of dominion were brightening into proud reality, that his destiny was gloriously linked with the overthrow of Imperial Rome!

But even in the moment of approaching triumph, the leader of the Goths was still wily in purpose and moderate in action. His impatient warriors waited but the word to commence the assault, to pillage the city, and to slaughter the inhabitants; but he withheld it. Scarcely had the army halted before the gates of Rome, when the news was promulgated among their ranks, that Alaric, for purposes of his own, had determined to reduce the city by a blockade.

The numbers of his forces, increased during his march by the accession of thirty thousand auxiliaries, were now divided into battalions, varying in strength according to the service that was required of them. These divisions stretched round the city walls, and though occupying separate posts, and devoted to separate duties, were so arranged as to be capable of uniting at a signal in any numbers, on any given point. Each body of men was commanded by a tried and veteran warrior, in whose fidelity Alaric could place the most implicit trust, and to whom he committed the duty of enforcing the strictest military discipline that had ever prevailed among the Gothic ranks. Before each of the twelve principal gates a separate encampment was raised. Multitudes watched the navigation of the Tiber in every possible direction, with untiring vigilance; and not one of the ordinary inlets to Rome, however apparently unimportant, was overlooked. By these means, every mode of communication between the beleaguered city and the wide and fertile tracts of land around it, was effectually prevented. When it is remembered that this elaborate plan of blockade was enforced against a place containing, at the lowest possible computation, twelve hundred thousand inhabitants, destitute of magazines for food within its walls, dependent for supplies on its regular contributions from the country without, governed by an irresolute senate, and defended by an enervated army, the horrors that now impended over the besieged Romans are as easily imagined as described.

Among the ranks of the army that now surrounded the doomed city, the division appointed to guard the Pincian Gate will be found, at this juncture, most worthy of the reader's attention: for one of the warriors appointed to its subordinate command was the young chieftain Hermanric, who had been accompanied by Goisvintha through all the toils and dangers of the march, since the time when we left him at the Italian Alps.

The watch had been set, the tents had been pitched, the defences had been raised on the portion of ground selected to occupy every possible approach to the Pincian Gate, as Hermanric retired to await by Goisvintha's side, whatever further commands he might yet be entrusted with, by his superiors in the Gothic camp. The spot occupied by the young warrior's simple tent was on a slight eminence, apart from the positions chosen by his comrades, eastward of the city gate, and overlooking at some distance the deserted gardens of the suburbs, and the stately palaces of the Pincian Hill. Behind his temporary dwelling was the open country, reduced to a fertile solitude by the flight of its terrified inhabitants; and at each side lay one unvarying prospect of military strength and preparation, stretching out its animated confusion of soldiers, tents, and engines of warfare, as far as the sight could reach. It was now evening. The walls of Rome, enshrouded in a rising mist, showed dim and majestic to the eyes of the Goths. The noises in the beleaguered city softened and deepened, seeming to be muffled in the

growing darkness of the autumn night, and becoming less and less audible as the vigilant besiegers listened to them from their respective posts. One by one, lights broke wildly forth at irregular distances, in the Gothic camp. Harshly and fitfully the shrill call of the signal trumpets rung from rank to rank; and through the dim thick air rose, in the intervals of the more important noises, the clash of heavy hammers and the shout of martial command. Wherever the preparations for the blockade were still incomplete, neither the approach of night nor the pretext of weariness were suffered for an instant to hinder their continued progress. Alaric's indomitable will conquered every obstacle of nature, and every deficiency of man. Darkness had no obscurity that forced him to repose, and lassitude no eloquence that lured him to delay.

In no part of the army had the commands of the Gothic king been so quickly and intelligently executed, as in that appointed to watch the Pincian Gate. The interview of Hermanric and Goisvintha in the young chieftain's tent, was, consequently, uninterrupted for a considerable space of time by any fresh mandate from the head-quarters of the camp.

In outward appearance, both the brother and sister had undergone a change remarkable enough to be visible, even by the uncertain light of the torch which now shone on them as they stood together at the door of the tent. The features of Goisvintha — which at the period when we first beheld her on the shores of the mountain lake, retained, in spite of her poignant

sufferings, much of the lofty and imposing beauty that had been their natural characteristic in her happier days — now preserved not the slightest traces of their former attractions. Its freshness had withered from her complexion, its fulness had departed from her form. Her eyes had contracted an unvarying sinister expression of malignant despair, and her manner had become sullen, repulsive, and distrustful. This alteration in her outward aspect, was but the result of a more perilous change in the disposition of her heart. The death of her last child at the very moment when her flight had successfully directed her to the protection of her people, had affected her more fatally than all the losses she had previously sustained. The difficulties and dangers that she had encountered in saving her offspring from the massacre; the dismal certainty that the child was the only one, out of all the former objects of her affection, left to her to love; the wild sense of triumph that she experienced in remembering, that in this single instance her solitary efforts had thwarted the savage treachery of the Court of Rome, had inspired her with feelings of devotion towards the last of her household which almost bordered on insanity. And, now that her beloved charge, her innocent victim, her future warrior, had after all her struggles for his preservation, pined and died; now that she was childless indeed; now that Roman cruelty had won its end in spite of all her patience, all her courage, all her endurance; every noble feeling within her sunk, annihilated at the shock. Her sorrow took the fatal

form which irretrievably destroys, in women, all the softer and better emotions;— it changed to the despair that asks no sympathy, to the grief that holds no communion with tears.

Less elevated in intellect and less susceptible in disposition, the change to sullenness of expression and abruptness of manner now visible in Hermanric, resulted rather from his constant contemplation of Goisvintha's gloomy despair, than from any actual revolution in his own character. In truth, however many might be the points of outward resemblance now discernible between the brother and sister, the difference in degree of their moral positions, implied of itself the difference in degree of the inward sorrow of each. Whatever the trials and afflictions that might assail him, Hermanric possessed the healthful elasticity of youth and the martial occupations of manhood to support them. Goisvintha could repose on neither. With no employment but bitter remembrance to engage her thoughts, with no kindly aspiration, no soothing hope to fill her heart, she was abandoned irrevocably to the influence of unpartaken sorrow and vindictive despair.

Both the woman and the warrior stood together in silence for some time. At length, without taking his eyes from the dusky, irregular mass before him, which was all that night now left visible of the ill-fated city, Hermanric addressed Goisvintha thus:—

“Have you no words of triumph, as you look on the ramparts that your people have fought for genera-

tions to behold at their mercy, as we now behold them? Can a woman of the Goths be silent when she stands before the city of Rome?"

"I came hither to behold Rome pillaged, and Romans slaughtered; what is Rome *blockaded* to me?" replied Goisvintha fiercely. "The treasures within that city will buy its safety from our King, as soon as the tremblers on the ramparts gain heart enough to penetrate a Gothic camp. Where is the vengeance that you promised me among those distant palaces? Do I behold you carrying that destruction through the dwellings of Rome, which the soldiers of yonder city carried through the dwellings of the Goths? Is it for plunder or for glory that the army is here? I thought, in my woman's delusion, that it was for revenge!"

"Dishonour will avenge you — Famine will avenge you — Pestilence will avenge you!"

"They will avenge my nation; they will not avenge *me*. I have seen the blood of Gothic women spilt around me — I have looked on my children's corpses bleeding at my feet! Will a famine that I cannot see, and a pestilence that I cannot watch, give me vengeance for this? Look! Here is the helmet-crest of *my* husband and *your* brother — the helmet-crest that was flung to me as a witness that the Romans had slain him! Since the massacre of Aquileia it has never quitted my bosom. I have sworn that the blood which stains and darkens it, shall be washed off in the blood of the people of Rome. Though I should perish under those accursed walls; though you in your soulless

patience should refuse me protection and aid; I, widowed, weakened, forsaken as I am, will hold to the fulfilment of my oath!"

As she ceased she folded the crest in her mantle, and turned abruptly from Hermanric in bitter and undissembled scorn. All the attributes of her sex, in thought, expression, and manner, seemed to have deserted her. The very tones she spoke in were harsh and unwomanly.

Every word she had uttered, every action she had displayed, had sunk into the inmost heart, had stirred the fiercest passions of the young warrior whom she addressed. The first national sentiment discoverable in the day-spring of the ages of Gothic history, is the love of war; but the second is the reverence of woman. This latter feeling — especially remarkable among so fierce and unsusceptible a people as the ancient Scandinavians — was entirely unconnected with those strong attaching ties, which are the natural consequence of the warm temperaments of more southern nations; for love was numbered with the base inferior passions, in the frigid and hardy composition of the warrior of the north. It was the offspring of reasoning and observation, not of instinctive sentiment and momentary impulse. In the wild, poetical code of the old Gothic superstition was one axiom, closely and strangely approximating to an important theory in the Christian scheme — the watchfulness of an omnipotent Creator over a finite creature. Every action of the body, every impulse of the mind, was the immediate result,

in the system of worship among the Goths, of the direct, though invisible interference of the divinities they adored. When, therefore, they observed that women were more submitted in body to the mysterious laws of nature and temperament, and more swayed in mind by the native and universal instincts of humanity than themselves, they inferred as an inevitable conclusion, that the female sex was more incessantly regarded, and more constantly and remarkably influenced by the gods of their worship, than the male. Acting under this persuasion, they committed the study of medicine, the interpretation of dreams, and, in many instances, the mysteries of communication with the invisible world, to the care of their women. The gentler sex became their counsellors in difficulty, and their physicians in sickness, — their companions rather than their mistresses, — the objects of their veneration rather than the purveyors of their pleasures. Although in after years, the national migrations of the Goths changed the national temperament, although their ancient mythology was exchanged for the worship of Christ, this prevailing sentiment of their earliest existence as a people never entirely deserted them; but, with different modifications and in different forms, maintained much of its old supremacy through all changes of manners and varieties of customs, descending finally to their posterity among the present nations of Europe, in the shape of that established code of universal courtesy to women, which is admitted to be one great distinguishing mark between the social

systems of the inhabitants of civilised and uncivilised lands.

This powerful and remarkable ascendancy of the woman over the man, among the Goths, could hardly be more strikingly displayed than in the instance of Hermanric. It appeared, not only in the deteriorating effect of the constant companionship of Goisvintha on his naturally manly character, but also in the strong influence over his mind of the last words of fury and disdain that she had spoken. His eyes gleamed with anger, his cheeks flushed with shame, as he listened to those passages in her wrathful remonstrance which reflected most bitterly on himself. She had scarcely ceased, and turned to retire into the tent, when he arrested her progress, and replied, in heightened and accusing tones: —

“You wrong me by your words! When I saw you among the Alps, did I refuse you protection? When the child was wounded, did I leave him to suffer unaided? When he died, did I forsake him to rot upon the earth, or abandon to his mother the digging of his grave? When we approached Aquileia, and marched past Ravenna, did I forget that the sword hung at my shoulder? Was it at *my* will that it remained sheathed, or that I entered not the gates of the Roman towns, but passed by them in haste? Was it not the command of the king that withheld me; and could I, his warrior, disobey? I swear it to you, the vengeance that I promised, I yearn to perform, — but is it for me to alter the counsels of Alaric? Can I

alone assault the city which it is his command that we should blockade? What would you have of me?"

"I would have you remember," retorted Goisvintha, indignantly, "that Romans slew your brother, and made me childless! I would have you remember that a public warfare of years on years, is powerless to stay one hour's craving of private vengeance! I would have you less submitted to your general's wisdom, and more devoted to your own wrongs! I would have you — like me — thirst for the blood of the first inhabitant of yonder den of traitors, who — whether for peace or for war — passes the precincts of its sheltering walls!"

She paused abruptly for an answer, but Hermanric uttered not a word. The courageous heart of the young chieftain recoiled at the deliberate act of assassination, pressed upon him in Goisvintha's veiled yet expressive speech. To act with his comrades in taking the city by assault, to outdo in the heat of battle the worst horrors of the massacre of Aquileia, would have been achievements in harmony with his wild disposition and warlike education; but, to submit himself to Goisvintha's projects, was a sacrifice, that the very peculiarities of his martial character made repugnant to his thoughts. Emotions such as these he would have communicated to his companion, as they passed through his mind; but there was something in the fearful and ominous change that had occurred in her disposition since he had met her among the Alps, — in her frantic, unnatural craving for bloodshed and

revenge, that gave her a mysterious and powerful influence over his thoughts, his words, and even his actions. He hesitated and was silent.

“Have I not been patient?” continued Goisvintha, lowering her voice to tones of earnest, agitated entreaty, which jarred upon Hermanric’s ear, as he thought who was the petitioner, and what would be the object of the petition. — “Have I not been patient throughout the weary journey from the Alps? Have I not waited for the hour of retribution, even before the defenceless cities that we passed on the march? Have I not at your instigation governed my yearning for vengeance, until the day that should see you mounting those walls with the warriors of the Goths, to scourge with fire and sword the haughty traitors of Rome? Has that day come? Is it by this blockade that the requital you promised me over the corpse of my murdered child, is to be performed? Remember the perils *I* dared, to preserve the life of that last one of my household, — and will *you* risk nothing to avenge his death? His sepulchre is untended and solitary. Far from the dwellings of his people, lost in the dawn of his beauty, slaughtered in the beginning of his strength, lies the offspring of your brother’s blood. And the rest — the two children, who were yet infants; the father, who was brave in battle and wise in council — where are they? Their bones whiten on the shelterless plain, or rot unburied by the ocean shore. Think — had they lived — how happily your days would have passed with them in the time of peace! how gladly your

brother would have gone forth with you to the chase! how joyfully his boys would have nestled at your knees, to gather from your lips the first lessons that should form them for the warrior's life! Think of such enjoyments as these, and then think that Roman swords have deprived you of them all!"

Her voice trembled, she ceased for a moment, and looked mournfully up into Hermanric's averted face. Every feature in the young chieftain's countenance expressed the tumult that her words had aroused within him. He attempted to reply, but his voice was powerless in that trying moment. His head drooped upon his heaving breast, and he sighed heavily as, without speaking, he grasped Goisvintha by the hand. The object she had pleaded for was nearly attained: — he was fast sinking beneath the tempter's well-spread toils!

"Are you silent still?" she gloomily resumed. "Do you wonder at this longing for vengeance, at this craving for Roman blood? I tell you that my desire has arisen within me, at promptings from the voices of an unknown world. They urge me to seek requital on the nation who have widowed and bereaved me — yonder, in their vaunted city, from their pampered citizens, among their cherished homes — in the spot where their shameful counsels take root, and whence their ruthless treacheries derive their bloody source! In the book that our teachers worship, I have heard it read, that 'the voice of blood crieth from the ground!' This is the voice — Hermanric, this is the voice that

I have heard! I have dreamed that I walked on a shore of corpses, by a sea of blood — I have seen, arising from that sea, my husband's and my children's bodies, gashed throughout with Roman wounds! They have called to me through the vapour of carnage that was around them; — 'Are we yet unavenged? Is the sword of Hermanric yet sheathed?' Night after night have I seen this vision and heard those voices, and hoped for no respite until the day that saw the army encamped beneath the walls of Rome, and raising the scaling ladders for the assault! And now, after all my endurance, how has that day arrived? Accursed be the lust of treasure! It is more to the warriors, and to you, than the justice of revenge!"

"Listen! listen!" cried Hermanric entreatingly.

"I listen no longer!" interrupted Goisvintha. "The tongue of my people is as a strange language in my ears; for it talks but of plunder and of peace, of obedience, of patience, and of hope! I listen no longer; for the kindred are gone that I loved to listen to — they are all slain by the Romans but you — and you I renounce!"

Deprived of all power of consideration by the violence of the emotions awakened in his heart by Goisvintha's wild revelations of the evil passion that consumed her, the young Goth, shuddering throughout his whole frame, and still averting his face, murmured in hoarse, unsteady accents: "Ask of me what you will! I have no words to deny, no power to rebuke you — ask of me what you will!"

“Promise me,” cried Goisvintha, seizing the hand of Hermanric, and gazing with a look of fierce triumph on his disordered countenance, “that this blockade of the city shall not hinder my vengeance! Promise me that the first victim of our righteous revenge, shall be the first one that appears before you — whether in war or peace — of the inhabitants of Rome!”

“I promise,” cried the Goth. And those two words sealed the destiny of his future life.

During the silence that now ensued between Goisvintha and Hermanric, and while each stood absorbed in deep meditation, the dark prospect spread around them began to brighten slowly under a soft, clear light. The moon, whose dull broad disk had risen among the evening mists arrayed in gloomy red, had now topped the highest of the exhalations of earth, and beamed in the wide heaven, adorned once more in her pale, accustomed hue. Gradually, yet perceptibly, the vapour rolled, — layer by layer, — from the lofty summits of the palaces of Rome, and the high places of the mighty city began to dawn, as it were, in the soft, peaceful, mysterious light; while the lower divisions of the walls, the desolate suburbs, and parts of the Gothic camp, lay still plunged in the dusky obscurity of the mist, in grand and gloomy contrast to the prospect of glowing brightness, that almost appeared to hover about them from above and around. Patches of ground behind the tent of Hermanric, began to grow partially visible in raised and open positions; and the song of

the nightingale was now faintly audible at intervals, among the solitary and distant trees. In whatever direction it was observed, the aspect of nature gave promise of the cloudless, tranquil night, of the autumnal climate of ancient Italy.

Hermanric was the first to return to the contemplation of the outward world. Perceiving that the torch which still burnt by the side of his tent, had become useless, now that the moon had arisen and dispelled the mists, he advanced and extinguished it; pausing afterwards to look forth over the plains, as they brightened slowly before him. He had been thus occupied but a short time, when he thought he discerned a human figure moving slowly over a spot of partially lightened and hilly ground, at a short distance from him. It was impossible that this wandering form could be one of his own people; — they were all collected at their respective posts, and his tent he knew was on the outermost boundary of the encampment before the Pincian Gate.

He looked again. The figure still advanced, but at too great a distance to allow him a chance of discovering, in the uncertain light around him, either its nation, its sex, or its age. His heart misgave him as he remembered his promise to Goisvintha, and contemplated the possibility that it was some miserable slave, abandoned by the fugitives who had quitted the suburbs in the morning, who now approached, as a last resource, to ask mercy and protection from his enemies in the camp. He turned towards Goisvintha as the

idea crossed his mind, and observed that she was still occupied in meditation. Assured by the sight, that she had not yet observed the fugitive figure, he again directed his attention — with an excess of anxiety which he could hardly account for — in the direction where he had first beheld it, but it was no more to be seen. It had either retired to concealment, or was now still advancing towards his tent through a clump of trees that clothed the descent of the hill.

Silently and patiently he continued to look forth over the landscape; and still no living thing was to be seen. At length, just as he began to doubt whether his senses had not deceived him, the fugitive figure suddenly appeared from the trees, hurried with wavering gait over the patch of low, damp ground that still separated it from the young Goth, gained his tent, and then with a feeble cry fell helplessly upon the earth at his feet.

That cry, faint as it was, attracted Goisvintha's attention. She turned in an instant, thrust Hermanric aside, and raised the stranger in her arms. The light, slender form, the fair hand and arm hanging motionless towards the ground, the long locks of deep black hair, heavy with the moisture of the night atmosphere, betrayed the wanderer's sex and age in an instant. The solitary fugitive was a young girl.

Signing to Hermanric to kindle the extinguished torch at a neighbouring watch-fire, Goisvintha carried the still insensible girl into the tent. As the Goth silently proceeded to obey her, a vague, horrid suspi-

cion, that he shrunk from embodying, passed across his mind. His hand shook so that he could hardly light the torch, and bold and vigorous as he was, his limbs trembled beneath him as he slowly returned to the tent.

When he had gained the interior of his temporary abode, the light of his torch illuminated a strange and impressive scene.

Goisvintha was seated on a rude oaken chest, supporting on her knees the form of the young girl, and gazing with an expression of the most intense and enthralling interest upon her pale, wasted countenance. The tattered robe that had hitherto enveloped the fugitive had fallen back, and disclosed the white dress, which was the only other garment she wore. Her face, throat, and arms, had been turned, by exposure to the cold, to the pure whiteness of marble. Her eyes were closed, and her small, delicate features were locked in a rigid repose. But for her deep black hair, which heightened the ghastly aspect of her face, she might have been mistaken, as she lay in the woman's arms, for an exquisitely chiseled statue of youth in death!

When the figure of the young warrior, arrayed in his martial habiliments, and standing near the insensible girl with evident emotions of wonder and anxiety, was added to the group thus produced, — when Goisvintha's tall, powerful frame, clothed in dark garments, and bent over the fragile form and white dress of the fugitive, was illuminated by the wild,

fitful glare of the torch, — when the heightened colour, worn features, and eager expression of the woman were beheld, here shadowed, there brightened, in close opposition to the pale, youthful, reposing countenance of the girl, such an assemblage of violent lights and deep shades was produced, as gave the whole scene a character at once mysterious and sublime. It presented an harmonious variety of solemn colours, united by the exquisite artifice of Nature to a grand, yet simple disposition of form. It was a picture executed by the hand of Rembrandt, and imagined by the mind of Raphael.

Starting abruptly from her long, earnest examination of the fugitive, Goisvintha proceeded to employ herself in restoring animation to her insensible charge. While thus occupied, she preserved unbroken silence. A breathless expectation, that absorbed all her senses in one direction, seemed to have possessed itself of her heart. She laboured at her task with the mechanical, unwavering energy of those, whose attention is occupied by their thoughts rather than their actions. Slowly and unwillingly the first faint flush of returning animation dawned, in the tenderest delicacy of hue, upon the girl's colourless cheek. Gradually and softly, her quickening respiration fluttered a thin lock of hair that had fallen over her face. A little interval more, and then the closed, peaceful eyes suddenly opened, and glanced quickly round the tent with a wild expression of bewilderment and terror. Then, as Goisvintha rose, and attempted to place her on a seat, she

tore herself from her grasp, looked on her for a moment with fearful intentness, and then falling on her knees, murmured, in a plaintive voice, —

“Have mercy upon me. I am forsaken by my father, — I know not why. The gates of the city are shut against me. My habitation in Rome is closed to me for ever!”

She had scarcely spoken these few words, before an ominous change appeared in Goisvintha's countenance. Its former expression of ardent curiosity changed to a look of malignant triumph. Her eyes fixed themselves on the girl's upturned face, in glaring, steady, spell-bound contemplation. She gloated over the helpless creature before her, as the wild beast gloats over the prey that it has secured. Her form dilated, a scornful smile appeared on her lips; a hot flush rose on her cheeks, and ever and anon she whispered softly to herself, “I knew she was Roman! Aha! I knew she was Roman!”

During this space of time Hermanric was silent. His breath came short and thick, his face grew pale, and his glance, after resting for an instant on the woman and the girl, travelled slowly and anxiously round the tent. In one corner of it lay a heavy battle-axe. He looked for a moment from the weapon to Goisvintha, with a vivid expression of horror, and then moving slowly across the tent, with a firm, yet trembling grasp, he possessed himself of the arm.

As he looked up, Goisvintha approached him. In one hand she held the bloody helmet-crest, while she

pointed with the other to the crouching figure of the girl. Her lips were still parted with their unnatural smile, and she whispered softly to the Goth — “Remember your promise! — remember your kindred! — remember the massacre of Aquileia!”

The young warrior made no answer. He moved rapidly forward a few steps, and signed hurriedly to the young girl to fly by the door; but her terror had by this time divested her of all her ordinary powers of perception and comprehension. She looked up vacantly at Hermanric, and then shuddering violently, crept into a corner of the tent. During the short silence that now ensued, the Goth could hear her shiver and sigh, as he stood watching, with all the anxiety of apprehension, Goisvintha’s darkening brow.

“She is Roman — she is the first dweller in the city who has appeared before you! — remember your promise! — remember your kindred! — remember the massacre of Aquileia!” said the woman in fierce, quick, concentrated tones.

“I remember that I am a warrior and a Goth,” replied Hermanric, disdainfully. “I have promised to avenge you, but it must be on a man that my promise must be fulfilled — an armed man, who can come forth with weapons in his hand — a strong man of courage whom I will slay in single combat before your eyes! The girl is too young to die, too weak to be assailed!”

Not a syllable that he had spoken had passed unheeded by the fugitive, every word seemed to revive

her torpid faculties. As he ceased she arose, and with the quick instinct of terror, ran up to the side of the young Goth. Then seizing his hand — the hand that still grasped the battle-axe — she knelt down and kissed it, uttering hurried broken ejaculations, as she clasped it to her bosom, which the tremulousness of her voice rendered completely unintelligible.

“Did the Romans think *my* children too young to die, or too weak to be assailed?” cried Goisvintha. “By the Lord God of Heaven, they murdered them the more willingly because they were young, and wounded them the more fiercely because they were weak! My heart leaps within me as I look on the girl! I am doubly avenged, if I am avenged on the innocent and the youthful! Her bones shall rot on the plains of Rome, as the bones of my offspring rot on the plains of Aquileia! Shed me her blood! — Remember your promise! — Shed me her blood!”

She advanced with extended arms and gleaming eyes towards the fugitive. She gasped for breath, her face turned suddenly to a livid paleness, the torchlight fell upon her distorted features, she looked unearthly at that fearful moment; but the divinity of mercy had now braced the determination of the young Goth to meet all emergencies. His bright steady eye quailed not for an instant, as he encountered the frantic glance of the fury before him. With one hand he barred Goisvintha from advancing another step; the other, he could not disengage from the girl, who now clasped and kissed it more eagerly than before.

“You do this but to tempt me to anger,” said Goisvintha, altering her manner with sudden and palpable cunning, more ominous of peril to the fugitive than the fury she had hitherto displayed. “You jest at me, because I have failed in patience, like a child! But you will shed her blood — you are honourable and will hold to your promise — you will shed her blood! And I,” she continued, exultingly, seating herself on the oaken chest that she had previously occupied, and resting her clenched hands on her knees; “I will wait to see it!”

At this moment voices and steps were heard outside the tent. Hermanric instantly raised the trembling girl from the ground, and supporting her by his arm, advanced to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. He was confronted the next instant by an old warrior of superior rank, attached to the person of Alaric, who was followed by a small party of the ordinary soldiery of the camp.

“Among the women appointed by the king to the office of tending, for this night, those sick and wounded on the march, is Goisvintha, sister of Hermanric. If she is here, let her approach and follow me;” said the chief of the party in authoritative tones, pausing at the door of the tent.

Goisvintha rose. For an instant she stood irresolute. To quit Hermanric at such a time as this, was a sacrifice that wrung her savage heart; — but she remembered the severity of Alaric’s discipline, she saw the armed men awaiting her, and yielded after a

struggle to the imperious necessity of obedience to the king's commands. Trembling with suppressed anger and bitter disappointment, she whispered to Hermanric as she passed him: —

“You cannot save her if you would! You dare not commit her to the charge of your companions, she is too young and too fair to be abandoned to their doubtful protection. You cannot escape with her, for you must remain here on the watch at your post. You will not let her depart by herself, for you know that she would perish with cold and privation before the morning rises. When I return on the morrow I shall see her in the tent. You *cannot* escape from your promise; — you cannot forget it, — you *must* shed her blood!”

“The commands of the king,” said the old warrior, signing to his party to depart with Goisvintha, who now stood with forced calmness awaiting their guidance: “will be communicated to the chieftain Hermanric on the morrow. Remember,” he continued in a lower tone, pointing contemptuously to the trembling girl; “that the vigilance you have shown in setting the watch before yonder gate, will not excuse any negligence your prize there may now cause you to commit! Consult your youthful pleasures as you please, but remember your duties! Farewell!”

Uttering these words in a stern, serious tone, the veteran departed. Soon the last sound of the footsteps of his escort died away, and Hermanic and the fugitive were left alone in the tent.

During the address of the old warrior to the chief-tain, the girl had silently detached herself from her protector's support, and retired hastily to the interior of the tent. When she saw that they were left together again, she advanced hesitatingly towards the young Goth, and looked up with an expression of mute inquiry into his face.

"I am very miserable," said she, after an interval of silence, in soft, clear, melancholy accents. "If you forsake me now, I must die — and I have lived so short a time on the earth, I have known so little happiness and so little love, that I am not fit to die! But you will protect me! You are good and brave, strong with weapons in your hands, and full of pity. You have defended me, and spoken kindly of me — I love you for the compassion you have shown me."

Her language and actions, simple as they were, were yet so new to Hermanric, whose experience of her sex had been almost entirely limited to the women of his own stern impassive nation, that he could only reply by a brief assurance of protection, when the supplicant awaited his answer. A new page in the history of humanity was opening before his eyes, and he scanned it in wondering silence.

"If that woman should return," pursued the girl, fixing her dark, eloquent eyes intently upon the Goth's countenance, "take me quickly where she cannot come. My heart grows cold as I look on her! She will kill me if she can approach me again! My father's anger is very fearful, but her's is horrible — horrible — hor-

rible! Hush! already I hear her coming back — let us go — I will follow you wherever you please — but let us not delay while there is time to depart! She will destroy me if she sees me now, and I cannot die yet! Oh my preserver, my compassionate defender, I cannot die yet!”

“No one shall harm you — no one shall approach you to-night — you are secure from all dangers in this tent,” said the Goth, gazing on her with undissembled astonishment and admiration.

“I will tell you why death is so dreadful to me,” she continued, and her voice deepened as she spoke, to tones of mournful solemnity, strangely impressive in a creature so young, “I have lived much alone, and have had no companions but my thoughts, and the sky that I could look up to, and the things on the earth that I could watch. As I have seen the clear heaven and the soft fields, and smelt the perfume of flowers, and heard the voices of singing-birds afar off, I have wondered why the same God who made all this, and made me, should have made grief and pain and hell — the dread eternal hell that my father speaks of in his church. I never looked at the sunlight, or woke from my sleep to look on and to think of the distant stars, but I longed to love something that might listen to my joy. But my father forbade me to be happy! He frowned even when he gave me my flower-garden — though God made flowers. He destroyed my lute — though God made music. My life has been a longing in loneliness for the voices

of friends! My heart has swelled and trembled within me, because when I walked in the garden and looked on the plains and woods and high, bright mountains that were round me, I knew that I loved them *alone!* Do you know now why I dare not die? It is because I must find first the happiness which I feel God has made for me. It is because I must live to praise this wonderful, beautiful world with others who enjoy it as I could! It is because my home has been among those who sigh, and never among those who smile! It is for this that I fear to die! I must find companions whose prayers are in singing and in happiness, before I go to the terrible hereafter that all dread. I dare not die! I dare not die!"

As she uttered these last words she began to weep bitterly. Between amazement and compassion the young Goth was speechless. He looked down upon the small, soft hand that she had placed on his arm while she spoke, and saw that it trembled; he pressed it, and felt that it was cold; and in the first impulse of pity produced by the action, he found the readiness of speech which he had hitherto striven for in vain.

"You shiver and look pale," said he; "a fire shall be kindled at the door of the tent. I will bring you garments that will warm you, and food that will give you strength; you shall sleep, and I will watch that no one harms you."

The girl hastily looked up. An expression of ineffable gratitude overspread her sorrowful countenance. She murmured in a broken voice, "Oh, how merciful,

how merciful you are!" And then, after an evident struggle with herself, she covered her face with her hands, and again burst into tears.

More and more embarrassed, Hermanric mechanically busied himself in procuring from such of his attendants as the necessities of the blockade left free, the supplies of fire, food and raiment, which he had promised. She received the coverings, approached the blazing fuel, and partook of the simple refreshment, which the young warrior offered her, with eagerness. After that she sat for some time silent, absorbed in deep meditation, and cowering over the fire, apparently unconscious of the curiosity with which she was still regarded by the Goth. At length she suddenly looked up, and observing his eyes fixed on her, arose and beckoned him to the seat that she occupied.

"Did you know how utterly forsaken I am," said she, "you would not wonder as you do, that I, a stranger and a Roman, have sought you thus. I have told you how lonely was my home; but yet that home was a refuge and a protection to me until the morning of this long day that is past, when I was expelled from it for ever! I was suddenly awakened in my bed by — my father entered in anger — he called me" —

She hesitated, blushed, and then paused at the very outset of her narrative. Innocent as she was, the natural instincts of her sex spoke, though in a mysterious yet in a warning tone, within her heart, abruptly imposing on her motives for silence that she

could neither penetrate nor explain. She clasped her trembling hands over her bosom as if to repress its heaving, and casting down her eyes, continued in a lower tone: —

“I cannot tell you why my father drove me from his doors. He has always been silent and sorrowful to me; setting me long tasks in mournful books; commanding that I should not quit the precincts of his abode, and forbidding me to speak to him when I have sometimes asked him to tell me of my mother whom I have lost. Yet he never threatened me or drove me from his side, until the morning of which I have told you. Then his wrath was terrible; his eyes were fierce; his voice was threatening! He bade me begone, and I obeyed him in affright, for I thought he would have slain me if I stayed! I fled from the house, knowing not where I went, and ran through yonder gate, which is hard by our abode. As I entered the suburbs, I met great crowds, all hurrying into Rome. I was bewildered by my fears and the confusion all around, yet I remember that they called loudly to me to fly to the city, ere the gates were closed against the assault of the Goths. And others jostled and scoffed at me, as they passed by and saw me in the thin night garments in which I was banished from my home!”

Here she paused and listened intently for a few moments. Every accidental noise that she heard still awakened in her the apprehension of Goisvintha's return. Reassured by Hermanric and by her own ob-

servation of all that was passing outside the tent, she resumed her narrative after an interval, speaking now in a steadier voice.

“I thought my heart would burst within me,” she continued, “as I tried to escape them. All things whirled before my eyes. I could not speak — I could not stop — I could not weep. I fled and fled I knew not whither, until I sank down exhausted at the door of a small house on the outskirts of the suburbs. Then I called for aid, but no one was by to hear me. I crept — for I could stand no longer — into the house. It was empty. I looked from the windows: no human figure passed through the silent streets. The roar of a mighty confusion still rose from the walls of the city, but I was left to listen to it alone. In the house I saw scattered on the floor some fragments of bread and an old garment. I took them both, and then rose and departed; for the silence of the place was horrible to me, and I remembered the fields and the plains that I had once loved to look on, and I thought that I might find there the refuge that had been denied to me at Rome! So I set forth once more; and when I gained the soft grass, and sat down beside the shady trees, and saw the sunlight brightening over the earth, my heart grew sad, and I wept as I thought on my loneliness and remembered my father’s anger.

“I had not long remained in my resting-place, when I heard a sound of trumpets in the distance, and looking forth, I saw far off, advancing over the plains, a mighty multitude with arms that glittered in the sun.

I strove, as I beheld them, to arise and return even to those suburbs whose solitude had affrighted me. But my limbs failed me. I saw a little hollow hidden among the trees around. I entered it, and there throughout the lonely day I lay concealed. I heard the long tramp of footsteps, as your army passed me on the roads beneath; and then, after those hours of fear came the weary hours of solitude!

“Oh, those — lonely — lonely — lonely hours! I have lived without companions, but those hours were more terrible to me than all the years of my former life! I dared not venture to leave my hiding-place — I dared not call! Alone in the world, I crouched in my refuge till the sun went down! Then came the mist, and the darkness, and the cold. The bitter winds of night thrilled through and through me! The lonely obscurity around me seemed filled with phantoms whom I could not behold, who touched me and rustled over the surface of my 'skin! They half maddened me! I rose to depart; to meet my wrathful father, or the army that had passed me, or solitude in the cold, bright meadows — I cared not which! — when I discerned the light of your torch, the moment ere it was extinguished. Dark though it then was, I found your tent. And now I know that I have found yet more — a companion and a friend!”

She looked up at the young Goth as she pronounced these words with the same grateful expression that had appeared on her countenance before; but this time her eyes were not dimmed by tears. Already her dispo-

sition — poor as was the prospect of happiness which now lay before it — had begun to return, with an almost infantine facility of change, to the restoring influences of the brighter emotions. Already the short tranquillities of the present began to exert for her their effacing charm over the long agitations of the past. Despair was unnumbered among the emotions that grew round that child-like heart; shame, fear, and grief, however they might overshadow it for a time, left no taint of their presence on its bright, fine surface. Tender, perilously alive to sensation, strangely retentive of kindness as she was by nature, the very solitude to which she had been condemned had gifted her, young as she was, with a martyr's endurance of ill, and with a stoic's patience under pain.

“Do not mourn for me now,” she pursued, gently interrupting some broken expressions of compassion which fell from the lips of the young Goth. “If *you* are merciful to me, I shall forget all that I have suffered! Though your nation is at enmity with mine, while you remain my friend, I fear nothing! I can look on your great stature, and heavy sword, and bright armour now without trembling! You are not like the soldiers of Rome; — you are taller, stronger, more gloriously arrayed! You are like a statue I once saw by chance of a warrior of the Greeks! You have a look of conquest and a presence of command!”

She gazed on the manly and powerful frame of the young warrior, clothed as it was in the accoutrements of his warlike nation, with an expression of

childish interest and astonishment, asking him the appellation and use of each part of his equipment, as it attracted her attention, and ending her inquiries by eagerly demanding his name.

“Hermanric,” she repeated, as he answered her, pronouncing with some difficulty the harsh Gothic syllables — “Hermanric! — that is a stern, solemn name — a name fit for a warrior and a man! Mine sounds worthless, after such a name as that! It is only Antonina!”

Deeply as he was interested in every word uttered by the girl, Hermanric could no longer fail to perceive the evident traces of exhaustion that now appeared in the slightest of her actions. Producing some furs from a corner of the tent, he made a sort of rude couch by the side of the fire, heaped fresh fuel on the flames, and then gently counselled her to recruit her wasted energies by repose. There was something so candid in his manner, so sincere in the tones of his voice, as he made his simple offer of hospitality to the stranger who had taken refuge with him, that the most distrustful woman would have accepted it with as little hesitation as Antonina; who, gratefully and unhesitatingly, laid down on the bed that he had been spreading for her at her feet.

As soon as he had carefully covered her with a cloak, and rearranged her couch in the position best calculated to insure her all the warmth of the burning fuel, Hermanric retired to the other side of the fire; and, leaning on his sword, abandoned himself to the

new and absorbing reflections which the presence of the girl naturally aroused.

He thought not on the duties demanded of him by the blockade; he remembered neither the scene of rage and ferocity that had followed his evasion of his reckless promise; nor the fierce determination that Goisvintha had expressed as she quitted him for the night. The cares and toils to come with the new morning, which would oblige him to expose the fugitive to the malignity of her revengeful enemy; the thousand contingencies that the difference of their sexes, their nations, and their lives, might create to oppose the continuance of the permanent protection that he had promised to her, caused him no forebodings. Antonina, and Antonina alone, occupied every faculty of his mind, and every feeling of his heart. There was a softness and a melody to his ear in her very name!

His early life had made him well acquainted with the Latin tongue, but he had never discovered all its native smoothness of sound, and elegance of structure, until he had heard it spoken by Antonina. Word by word, he passed over in his mind her varied, natural, and happy turns of expression; recalling, as he was thus employed, the eloquent looks, the rapid gesticulations, the changing tones which had accompanied those words, and thinking how wide was the difference between this young daughter of Rome, and the cold and taciturn women of his own nation. The very mystery enveloping her story, which would have excited the

suspicion or contempt of more civilised men, aroused in him no other emotions than those of wonder and compassion. No feelings of a lower nature than these entered his heart towards the girl. She was safe under the protection of the enemy and the barbarian, after having been lost through the interference of the Roman and the senator.

To the simple perceptions of the Goth, the discovery of so much intelligence united to such extreme youth, of so much beauty doomed to such utter loneliness, was the discovery of an apparition that dazzled, and not of a woman who charmed him. He could not even have touched the hand of the helpless creature, who now reposed under his tent, unless she had extended it to him of her own accord. He could only think — with a delight whose excess he was far from estimating himself — on this solitary, mysterious being who had come to him for shelter and for aid; who had awakened in him already new sources of sensation; and who seemed to his startled imagination to have suddenly twined herself for ever about the destinies of his future life.

He was still deep in meditation, when he was startled by a hand suddenly laid on his arm. He looked up and saw that Antonina, whom he had imagined to be slumbering on her couch, was standing by his side.

“I cannot sleep,” said the girl in a low, awe-struck voice, “until I have asked you to spare my father when you enter Rome. I know that you are here to

ravage the city; and, for aught I can tell, you may assault and destroy it to-night. Will you promise to warn me before the walls are assailed? I will then tell you my father's name and abode, and you will spare *him* as you have mercifully spared *me*? He has denied me his protection, but he is my father still; and I remember that I disobeyed him once, when I possessed myself of a lute! Will you promise me to spare him? My mother, whom I have never seen and who must therefore be dead, may love me in another world for pleading for my father's life!"

In a few words, Hermanric quieted her agitation by explaining to her the nature and intention of the Gothic blockade, and she silently returned to the couch. After a short interval, her slow, regular breathing announced to the young warrior, as he watched by the side of the fire, that she had at length forgotten the day's heritage of misfortune in the welcome oblivion of sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

The Two Interviews.

THE time, is the evening of the first day of the Gothic blockade; the place, is Vetrano's palace at Rome. In one of the private apartments of his mansion is seated its all-accomplished owner, released at length from the long sitting convened by the Senate on the occasion of the unexpected siege of the city. Although the same complete discipline, the same

elegant regularity, and the same luxurious pomp, which distinguished the senator's abode in times of security, still prevail over it in the time of imminent danger which now threatens rich and poor alike in Rome, Vetricio himself appears far from partaking the tranquillity of his patrician household. His manner displays an unusual sternness, and his face an unwonted displeasure, as he sits, occupied by his silent reflections and thoroughly unregardful of whatever occurs around him. Two ladies who are his companions in the apartment, exert all their blandishments to win him back to hilarity, but in vain. The services of his expectant musicians are not put into requisition, the delicacies on his table remain untouched, and even "the inestimable kitten of the breed most worshipped by the ancient Egyptians" gambols unnoticed and unapplauded at his feet. All its wonted philosophical equanimity has evidently departed, for the time at least, from the senator's mind.

Silence — hitherto a stranger to the palace apartments — had reigned uninterruptedly over them for some time, when the freedman Carrio dissipated Vetricio's meditations, and put the ladies who were with him to flight, by announcing in an important voice, that the Prefect Pompeianus desired a private interview with the Senator Vetricio.

The next instant the chief magistrate of Rome entered the apartment. He was a short, fat, undignified man. Indolence and vacillation were legibly impressed on his appearance and expression. You saw,

in a moment, that his mind, like a shuttlecock, might be urged in any direction by the efforts of others, but was utterly incapable of volition by itself. But once in his life had the Prefect Pompeianus been known to arrive unaided at a positive determination, and that was in deciding a fierce argument between a bishop and a general, regarding the relative merits of two rival rope-dancers of equal renown.

"I have come, my beloved friend," said the Prefect in agitated tones, "to ask your opinion, at this period of awful responsibility for us all, on the plan of operations proposed by the Senate at the sitting of to-day! But first," he hastily continued, perceiving with the unerring instinct of an old gastronome, that the inviting refreshments on Vetricio's table had remained untouched, "permit me to fortify my exhausted energies by a visit to your ever-luxurious board. Alas, my friend, when I consider the present fearful scarcity of our provision stores in the city, and the length of time that this accursed blockade may be expected to last, I am inclined to think that the gods alone know (I mean St. Peter) how much longer we may be enabled to give occupation to our digestions and employment to our cooks.

"I have observed," pursued the Prefect, after an interval, speaking with his mouth full of stewed pea-cock; "I have observed, oh esteemed colleague! the melancholy of your manner and your absolute silence during your attendance to-day at our deliberations. Have we, in your opinion, decided erroneously? It is

not impossible! Our confusion at this unexpected appearance of the barbarians may have blinded our usual penetration! If by any chance you dissent from our plans, I beseech you communicate your objections to me without reserve!"

"I dissent from nothing, because I have heard nothing," replied Vetrano sullenly. "I was so occupied by a private matter of importance during my attendance at the sitting of the Senate, that I was deaf to their deliberations. I know that we are besieged by the Goths — why are they not driven from before the walls?"

"Deaf to our deliberations! Drive the Goths from the walls!" repeated the Prefect faintly. "Can you think of any private matter at such a moment as this? Do you know our danger? Do you know that our friends are so astonished at this frightful calamity, that they move about like men half awakened from a dream? Have you not seen the streets filled with terrified and indignant crowds? Have you not mounted the ramparts and beheld the innumerable multitudes of pitiless Goths surrounding us on all sides, intercepting our supplies of provisions from the country, and menacing us with a speedy famine, unless our hoped-for auxiliaries arrive from Ravenna?"

"I have neither mounted the ramparts, nor viewed with any attention the crowds in the streets," replied Vetrano, carelessly.

"But if you have seen nothing yourself, you must have heard what others saw," persisted the Prefect;

“you must know at least that the legions we have in the city are not sufficient to guard more than half the circuit of the walls. Has no one informed you that if it should please the leader of the barbarians to change his blockade into an assault, it is more than probable that we should be unable to repulse him successfully? Are you still deaf to our deliberations, when your palace may to-morrow be burnt over your head, when we may be starved to death, when we may be doomed to eternal dishonour by being driven to conclude a peace? Deaf to our deliberations, when such an unimaginable calamity as this invasion has fallen like a thunderbolt under our very walls! You amaze me! You overwhelm me! You horrify me!”

And in the excess of his astonishment the bewildered Prefect actually abandoned his stewed peacock, and advanced, wine-cup in hand, to obtain a nearer view of the features of his imperturbable host.

“If we are not strong enough to drive the Goths out of Italy,” rejoined Vetrico coolly, “you and the Senate know that we are rich enough to bribe them to depart to the remotest confines of the empire. If we have not swords enough to fight, we have gold and silver enough to pay.”

“You are jesting! Remember our honour and the auxiliaries we still hope for from Ravenna,” said the Prefect reprovingly.

“Honour has lost the signification now, that it had in the time of the Cæsars,” retorted the Senator. “Our fighting days are over. We have had heroes enough

for our reputation. As for the auxiliaries you still hope for, you will have none! While the Emperor is safe in Ravenna, he will care nothing for the worst extremities that can be suffered by the people of Rome."

"But you forget your duties," urged the astonished Pompeianus, turning from rebuke to expostulation. "You forget that it is a time when all private interests must be abandoned! You forget that I have come here to ask your advice, that I am bewildered by a thousand projects, forced on me from all sides, for ruling the city successfully during the blockade; that I look to you, as a friend and a man of reputation, to aid me in deciding on a choice out of the varied counsels submitted to me in the Senate to-day."

"Write down the advice of each senator on a separate strip of vellum; shake all the strips together in an urn; and then, let the first you take out by chance, be your guide to govern by it the present condition of the city!" said Vetricio with a sneer.

"Oh friend, friend! it is cruel to jest with me thus!" cried the Prefect, in tones of lament; "Would you really persuade me you are ignorant that what sentinels we have, are doubled already on the walls? Would you attempt to declare seriously to me, that you never heard the project of Saturninus for reducing imperceptibly the diurnal allowance of provisions? Or the recommendation of Emilianus, that the people should be kept from thinking on the dangers and extremities which now threaten them, by being provided incessantly

with public amusements at the theatres and hippodromes? Do you really mean that you are indifferent to the horrors of our present situation? By the souls of the Apostles, Vetrano, I begin to think that you do not believe in the Goths!"

"I have already told you that private affairs occupy me at present, to the exclusion of public," said Vetrano impatiently. "Debate as you choose — approve what projects you will — I withdraw myself from interference in your deliberations!"

"This," murmured the repulsed Prefect in soliloquy, as he mechanically resumed his place at the refreshment table, "this is the very end and climax of all calamities! Now, when advice and assistance are more precious than jewels in my estimation, I receive neither! I gain from none, the wise and saving counsels which, as chief magistrate of this Imperial City, it is my right to demand from all; and the man on whom I most depended is the man who fails me most! Yet hear me, oh Vetrano, once again," he continued, addressing the Senator, "if our perils beyond the walls affect you not, there is a weighty matter that has been settled within them, which must move you. After you had quitted the Senate, Serena, the widow of Stilicho, was accused, as her husband was accused before her, of secret and treasonable correspondence with the Goths; and has been condemned, as her husband was condemned, to suffer the penalty of death. I myself discerned no evidence to convict her; but the populace cried out, in universal frenzy, that she was guilty, that

she should die; and that the barbarians, when they heard of the punishment inflicted on their secret adherent, would retire in dismay from Rome. This also was a moot point of argument, on which I vainly endeavoured to decide; but the Senate and the people were wiser than I; and Serena was condemned to be strangled to-morrow by the public executioner. She was a woman of good report before this time, and is the adopted mother of the Emperor. It is now doubted by many whether Stilicho, her husband, was ever guilty of the correspondence with the Goths, of which he was accused; and I, on my part, doubt much that Serena has deserved the punishment of death at our hands. I beseech you, Vetrico, let me be enlightened by your opinion on this one point at least!"

The Prefect waited anxiously for an answer, but Vetrico neither looked at him nor replied. It was evident that the Senator had not listened to a word that he had said!

This reception of his final appeal for assistance, produced the effect on the petitioner, which it was perhaps designed to convey — the Prefect Pompeianus quitted the room in despair.

He had not long departed, when Carrio again entered the apartment, and addressed his master thus:

"It is grievous for me, revered patron, to disclose it to you, but your slaves have returned unsuccessful from the search!"

"Give the description of the girl to a fresh division

of them, and let them continue their efforts throughout the night, not only in the streets, but in all the houses of public entertainment in the city. She *must* be in Rome, and she *must* be found!" said the senator gloomily.

Carrio bowed profoundly, and was about to depart, when he was arrested at the door by his master's voice.

"If an old man, calling himself Numerian, should desire to see me," said Vetranio, "admit him instantly."

"She had quitted the room but a short time when I attempted to reclaim her," pursued the senator, speaking to himself; "and yet when I gained the open air, she was nowhere to be seen! She must have mingled unintentionally with the crowds whom the Goths drove into the city, and thus have eluded my observation! So young and so innocent! She must be found! She must be found!"

He paused, once more engrossed in deep and melancholy thought. After a long interval, he was roused from his abstraction by the sound of footsteps on the marble floor. He looked up. The door had been opened without his perceiving it, and an old man was advancing with slow and trembling steps towards his silken couch. It was the bereaved and broken-hearted Numerian.

"Where is she? Is she found?" asked the father, gazing anxiously round the room, as if he had expected to see his daughter there.

"My slaves still search for her," said Vetrano, mournfully.

"Ah, woe — woe — woe! How I wronged her! How I wronged her!" cried the old man, turning to depart.

"Listen to me ere you go," said Vetrano, gently detaining him. "I have done you a great wrong, but I will yet atone for it by finding for you your child! While there were women who would have triumphed in my admiration, I should not have attempted to deprive you of your daughter! Remember when you recover her — and you shall recover her — that from the time when I first decoyed her into listening to my lute, to the night when your traitorous servant led me to her bed-chamber, she has been innocent in this ill-considered matter. I alone have been guilty! She was scarcely awakened when you discovered her in my arms, and my entry into her chamber, was as little expected by her, as it was by you. I was bewildered by the fumes of wine and the astonishment of your sudden appearance, or I should have rescued her from your anger, ere it was too late! The events which have passed this morning, confused though they were, have yet convinced me that I had mistaken you both. I now know that your child was too pure to be an object fitted for *my* pursuit; and I believe that in secluding her as you did, however ill-advised you might appear, you were honest in your design! Never in my pursuit of pleasure did I commit so fatal an error, as when I entered the doors of your house!"

In pronouncing these words, Vetricio but gave expression to the sentiments by which they were really inspired. As we have before observed, profligate as he was by thoughtlessness of character and license of social position, he was neither heartless nor criminal by nature. Fathers had stormed, but his generosity had hitherto invariably pacified them. Daughters had wept, but had found consolation on all previous occasions in the splendour of his palace and the amiability of his disposition. In attempting, therefore, the abduction of Antonina, though he had prepared for unusual obstacles, he had expected no worse results of his new conquest, than those that had followed, as yet, his gallantries that were past. But, when — in the solitude of his own home, and in the complete possession of his faculties — he recalled all the circumstances of his attempt, from the time when he had stolen on the girl's slumbers, to the moment when she had fled from the house; when he remembered the stern concentrated anger of Numerian, and the agony and despair of Antonina; when he thought on the spirit-broken repentance of the deceived father, and the fatal departure of the injured daughter, he felt as a man who had not merely committed an indiscretion, but had been guilty of a crime; he became convinced that he had incurred the fearful responsibility of destroying the happiness of a parent who was really virtuous, and a child who was truly innocent. To a man, the business of whose whole life was to procure for himself a heritage of unalloyed pleasure, whose

sole occupation was to pamper that refined sensuality which the habits of a life had made the very material of his heart, by diffusing luxury and awakening smiles wherever he turned his steps, the mere mental disquietude attending the ill-success of his intrusion into Numerian's dwelling, was as painful in its influence, as the bitterest remorse that could have afflicted a more highly-principled mind. He now, therefore, instituted the search after Antonina, and expressed his contrition to her father, from a genuine persuasion that nothing but the completest atonement for the error he had committed, could restore to him that luxurious tranquillity, the loss of which had, as he had himself expressed it, rendered him deaf to the deliberations of the Senate, and regardless of the invasion of the Goths.

"Tell me," he continued, after a pause, "whither has Ulpian betaken himself? It is necessary that he should be discovered. He may enlighten us upon the place of Antonina's retreat. He shall be secured and questioned."

"He left me suddenly; I saw him as I stood at the window, mix with the multitude in the street, but I know not whither he is gone," replied Numerian; and a tremor passed over his whole frame as he spoke of the remorseless Pagan.

Again there was a short silence. The grief of the broken-spirited father, possessed in its humility and despair, a voice of rebuke, before which the senator, careless and profligate as he was, instinctively quailed.

For some time he endeavoured in vain to combat the silencing and reproving influence, exerted over him by the very presence of the sorrowing man whom he had so fatally wronged. At length, after an interval, he recovered self-possession enough to address to Numerian some further expressions of consolation and hope; but he spoke to ears that listened not. The father had relapsed into his mournful abstraction; and when the senator paused, he merely muttered to himself — “She is lost! Alas, she is lost for ever!”

“No, she is not lost for ever,” cried Vetricio, warmly. “I have wealth and power enough to cause her to be sought for to the ends of the earth! Ulpian shall be secured and questioned — imprisoned, tortured, if it is necessary. Your daughter *shall* be recovered. Nothing is impossible to a senator of Rome!”

“I knew not that I loved her, until the morning when I wronged and banished her!” continued the old man, still speaking to himself. “I have lost all traces of my parents and my brother — my wife is parted from me for ever — I have nothing left but Antonina; and now too she is gone! Even my ambition, that I once thought my all in all, is no comfort to my soul; for I loved it — alas! unconsciously loved it — through the being of my child! I destroyed her lute — I thought her shameless — I drove her from my doors! Oh, how I wronged her! — how I wronged her!”

“Remain here, and repose yourself in one of the

sleeping apartments, until my slaves return in the morning. You will then hear without delay of the result of their search to-night," said Vetranio, in kindly and compassionate tones.

"It grows dark — dark!" groaned the father, tottering towards the door; "but that is nothing: daylight itself now looks darkness to me! I must go: I have duties at the chapel to perform. Night is repose for *you* — for *me*, it is tribulation and prayer!"

He departed as he spoke. Slowly he paced along the streets that led to his chapel, glancing with penetrating eye at each inhabitant of the besieged city who passed him on his way. With some difficulty he arrived at his destination; for Rome was still thronged with armed men hurrying backwards and forwards, and with crowds of disorderly citizens pouring forth, wherever there was space enough for them to assemble. The report of the affliction that had befallen him had already gone abroad among his hearers, and they whispered anxiously to each other as he entered the plain, dimly-lighted chapel, and slowly mounted the pulpit to open the service, by reading the chapter in the Bible which had been appointed for perusal that night, and which happened to be the fifth of the Gospel of St. Mark. His voice trembled, his face was ghastly pale, and his hands shook perceptibly as he began; but he read on, in low, broken tones, and with evident pain and difficulty, until he came to the verse containing these words: "My little daughter lieth at the point of death." Here he stopped suddenly,

endeavoured vainly for a few minutes to proceed, and then, covering his face with his hands, sank down in the pulpit and sobbed aloud. His sorrowing and startled audience immediately gathered round him, raised him in their arms, and prepared to conduct him to his own abode. When, however, they had gained the door of the chapel, he desired them gently, to leave him and return to the performance of the service among themselves. Ever implicitly obedient to his slightest wishes, the persons of his little assembly, moved to tears by the sight of their teacher's suffering, obeyed him, by retiring silently to their former places. As soon as he found that he was alone, he passed the door; and whispering to himself, "I must join those who seek her! I must aid them myself in the search!" — he mingled once more with the disorderly citizens who thronged the darkened streets.

CHAPTER X.

The Rift in the Wall.

WHEN Ulpius suddenly departed from Numerian's house on the morning of the siege, it was with no distinct intention of betaking himself to any particular place, or devoting himself to any immediate employment. It was to give vent to his joy — to the ecstasy that now filled his heart to bursting — that he sought the open streets. His whole moral being was exalted by that overwhelming sense of triumph, which urges the physical nature into action. He

hurried into the free air, as a child runs on a bright day in the wide fields; his delight was too wild to expand under a roof; his excess of bliss swelled irrepressibly beyond all artificial limits of space.

The Goths were in sight! A few hours more, and their scaling ladders would be planted against the walls. On a city so weakly guarded as Rome, their assault must be almost instantaneously successful. Thirsting for plunder, they would descend in infuriated multitudes on the defenceless streets. Christians though they were, the restraints of religion would, in that moment of fierce triumph, be powerless with such a nation of marauders against the temptations to pillage. Churches would be ravaged and destroyed; priests would be murdered in attempting the defence of their ecclesiastical treasures; fire and sword would waste to its remotest confines the stronghold of Christianity, and overwhelm in death and oblivion the boldest of Christianity's devotees! Then, when the hurricane of ruin and crime had passed over the city, when a new people were ripe for another government and another religion — then would be the time to invest the banished gods of old Rome with their former rule; to bid the survivors of the stricken multitude remember the judgment that their apostasy to their ancient faith had demanded and incurred; to strike the very remembrance of the Cross out of the memory of man; and to reinstate Paganism on her throne of sacrifices, and under her roof of gold, more powerful from her past persecutions; more universal in

her sudden restoration, than in all the glories of her ancient rule!

Such thoughts as these passed through the Pagan's toiling mind as, unobservant of all outward events, he paced through the streets of the beleaguered city. Already he beheld the army of the Goths preparing the way, as the unconscious pioneers of the returning gods, for the march of that mighty revolution which he was determined to lead. The warmth of his past eloquence, the glow of his old courage, thrilled through his heart, as he figured to himself the prospect that would soon stretch before him — a city laid waste, a people terrified, a government distracted, a religion destroyed. Then, arising amid this darkness and ruin; amid this solitude, desolation, and decay, it would be *his* glorious privilege to summon an unfaithful people to return to the mistress of their ancient love; to rise from prostration beneath a dismantled Church; and to seek prosperity in temples re-peopled and at shrines restored!

All remembrance of late events now entirely vanished from his mind. Numerian, Vetrician, Antonina, they were all forgotten in this memorable advent of the Goths! His slavery in the mines, his last visit to Alexandria, his earlier wanderings — even these, so present to his memory until the morning of the siege, were swept from its very surface now. Age, solitude, infirmity — hitherto the mournful sensations which were proofs to him that he still continued to exist — suddenly vanished from his perceptions, as

things that were not; and now at length he forgot that he was an outcast, and remembered triumphantly that he was still a priest. He felt animated by the same hopes, elevated by the same aspirations, as in those early days when he had harangued the wavering Pagans in the Temple, and first plotted the overthrow of the Christian Church.

It was a terrible and warning proof of the omnipotent influence that a single idea may exercise over a whole life, to see that old man wandering among the crowds around him, still enslaved, after years of suffering and solitude, degradation, and crime, by the same ruling ambition, which had crushed the promise of his early youth! It was an awful testimony to the eternal and mysterious nature of thought, to behold that wasted and weakened frame; and then to observe how the unassailable mind within still swayed the wreck of body yet left to it — how faithfully the last exhausted resources of failing vigour rallied into action at its fierce command — how quickly, at its mocking voice, the sunken eye lightened again with a gleam of hope, and the pale, thin lips parted mechanically with an exulting smile!

The hours passed, but he still walked on—whither or among whom he neither knew nor cared. No remorse touched his heart for the destruction that he had wreaked on the Christian who had sheltered him; no terror appalled his soul at the contemplation of the miseries that he believed to be in preparation for the city from the enemy at its gates. The end that had

hallowed to him the long series of his former offences and former sufferings, now obliterated iniquities just passed, and stripped of all their horrors, atrocities immediately to come.

The Goths might be destroyers to others, but they were benefactors to *him*; for they were harbingers of the ruin which would be the material of his reform, and the source of his triumph. It never entered his imagination that, as an inhabitant of Rome, he shared the approaching perils of the citizens, and in the moment of the assault might share their doom. He beheld only the new and gorgeous prospect that war and rapine were opening before him. He thought only of the time that must elapse ere his new efforts could be commenced — of the orders of the people among whom he should successively make his voice heard — of the temples which he should select for restoration — of the quarter of Rome which should first be chosen for the reception of his daring reform.

At length he paused; his exhausted energies yielded under the exertions imposed on them, and obliged him to bethink himself of refreshment and repose. It was now noon. The course of his wanderings had insensibly conducted him again to the precincts of his old, familiar dwelling-place; he found himself at the back of the Pincian Mount, and only separated by a strip of uneven woody ground, from the base of the city wall. The place was very solitary. It was divided from the streets and mansions above by thick groves and extensive gardens, which stretched

along the undulating descent of the hill. A short distance to the westward lay the Pincian Gate, but an abrupt turn in the wall and some olive trees which grew near it, shut out all view of objects in that direction. On the other side, towards the eastward, the ramparts were discernible, running in a straight line of some length, until they suddenly turned inwards at a right angle and were concealed from further observation by the walls of a distant palace and the pine trees of a public garden. The only living figure discernible near this lonely spot, was that of a sentinel, who occasionally passed over the ramparts above, which — situated as they were between two stations of soldiery, one at the Pincian Gate and the other where the wall made the angle already described — were untenanted, save by the guard within the limits of whose watch they happened to be placed. Here, for a short space of time, the Pagan rested his weary frame, and aroused himself insensibly from the enthralling meditations which had hitherto blinded him to the troubled aspect of the world around him.

He now for the first time heard on all sides distinctly, the confused noises which still rose from every quarter of Rome. The same incessant strife of struggling voices and hurrying footsteps, which had caught his ear in the early morning, attracted his attention now; but no shrieks of distress, no clash of weapons, no shouts of fury and defiance, were mingled with them; although, as he perceived by the position of the sun, the day had sufficiently advanced to have

brought the Gothic army long since to the foot of the walls. What could be the cause of this delay in the assault; of this ominous tranquillity on the ramparts above him? Had the impetuosity of the Goths suddenly vanished at the sight of Rome? Had negotiations for peace been organised with the first appearance of the invaders? He listened again. No sounds caught his ear differing in character from those he had just heard. Though besieged, the city was evidently — from some mysterious cause — not even threatened by an assault.

Suddenly there appeared from a little pathway near him, which led round the base of the wall, a woman preceded by a child, who called to her impatiently, as he ran on, "Hasten, mother, hasten! There is no crowd here. Yonder is the Gate. We shall have a noble view of the Goths!"

There was something in the address of the child to the woman, that gave Ulpus a suspicion, even then, of the discovery that flashed upon him soon after. He rose and followed them. They passed onward by the wall, through the olive trees beyond, and then gained the open space before the Pincian Gate. Here a great concourse of people had assembled, and were suffered, in their proper turn, to ascend the ramparts in divisions, by some soldiers who guarded the steps by which they were approached. After a short delay, Ulpus and those around him were permitted to gratify their curiosity, as others had done before them. They mounted the walls, and beheld, stretched over the

ground within and beyond the suburbs, the vast circumference of the Gothic lines.

Terrible and almost sublime as was the prospect of that immense multitude, seen under the brilliant illumination of the noontide sun, it was not impressive enough to silence the turbulent loquacity rooted in the dispositions of the people of Rome. Men, women, and children, all made their noisy and conflicting observations on the sight before them, in every variety of tone, from the tremulous accents of terror, to the loud vociferations of bravado.

Some spoke boastfully of the achievements that would be performed by the Romans, when their expected auxiliaries arrived from Ravenna. Others foreboded, in undissembled terror, an assault under cover of the night. Here, a group abused, in low, confidential tones, the policy of the government in its past relations with the Goths. There, a company of ragged vagabonds amused themselves by pompously confiding to each other their positive conviction, that at that very moment the barbarians must be trembling in their camp, at the mere sight of the all-powerful Capital of the World. In one direction, people were heard noisily speculating whether the Goths would be driven from the walls by the soldiers of Rome, or be honoured by an invitation to conclude a peace with the august Empire, which they had so treasonably ventured to invade. In another, the more sober and reputable among the spectators audibly expressed their apprehensions of starvation, dishonour, and defeat,

should the authorities of the city be foolhardy enough to venture a resistance to Alaric and his barbarian hosts. But wide as was the difference of the particular opinions hazarded among the citizens, they all agreed in one unavoidable conviction, that Rome had escaped the immediate horrors of an assault, to be threatened — if unaided by the legions at Ravenna — by the prospective miseries of a blockade.

Amid the confusion of voices around him, that word "blockade" alone reached the Pagan's ear. It brought with it a flood of emotions that overwhelmed him. All that he saw, all that he heard, connected itself imperceptibly with that expression. A sudden darkness, neither to be dissipated nor escaped, seemed to obscure his faculties in an instant. He struggled mechanically through the crowd, descended the steps of the ramparts, and returned to the solitary spot where he had first beheld the woman and the child.

The city was blockaded! The Goths were bent then, on obtaining a peace and not on achieving a conquest! The city was blockaded! It was no error of the ignorant multitude — he had seen with his own eyes the tents and positions of the enemy, he had heard the soldiers on the wall discoursing on the admirable disposition of Alaric's forces, on the impossibility of obtaining the smallest communication with the surrounding country, on the vigilant watch that had been set over the navigation of the Tiber. There was no doubt on the matter — the barbarians had determined on a blockade!

There was even less uncertainty upon the results which would be produced by this unimaginable policy of the Goths — the city would be saved! Rome had not scrupled in former years to purchase the withdrawal of all enemies from her distant provinces; and now that the very centre of her glory, the very pinnacle of her declining power, was threatened with sudden and unexpected ruin, she would lavish on the Goths the treasures of the whole empire, to bribe them to peace and to tempt them to retreat. The Senate might possibly delay the necessary concessions, from hopes of assistance that would never be realised; but sooner or later the hour of negotiation would arrive; northern rapacity would be satisfied with southern wealth; and in the very moment when it seemed inevitable, the ruin from which the Pagan revolution was to derive its vigorous source, would be diverted from the churches of Rome.

Could the old renown of the Roman name have retained so much of its ancient influence as to daunt the hardy Goths, after they had so successfully penetrated the empire as to have reached the walls of its vaunted capital? Could Alaric have conceived so exaggerated an idea of the strength of the forces in the city as to despair, with all his multitudes, of storming it with success? It could not be otherwise! No other consideration could have induced the barbarian general to abandon such an achievement as the destruction of Rome. With the chance of an assault the prospects of Paganism had brightened — with the certainty of

a blockade, they sunk immediately into disheartening gloom!

Filled with these thoughts, Ulpius paced backwards and forwards in his solitary retreat, utterly abandoned by the exaltation of feeling which had restored to his faculties in the morning, the long-lost vigour of their former youth. Once more, he experienced the infirmities of his age; once more he remembered the miseries that had made his existence one unending martyrdom; once more he felt the presence of his ambition within him, like a judgment that he was doomed to welcome, like a curse that he was created to cherish. To say that his sensations at this moment were those of the culprit who hears the order for his execution when he had been assured of a reprieve, is to convey but a faint idea of the fierce emotions of rage, grief, and despair, that now united to rend the Pagan's heart.

Overpowered with weariness both of body and mind, he flung himself down under the shade of some bushes that clothed the base of the wall above him. As he lay there — so still in his heavy lassitude that life itself seemed to have left him — one of the long green lizards, common to Italy, crawled over his shoulder. He seized the animal — doubtful for the moment whether it might not be of the poisonous species — and examined it. At the first glance he discovered that it was of the harmless order of its race, and would have flung it carelessly from him, but for something in its appearance which, in the wayward

irritability of his present mood, he felt a strange and sudden pleasure in contemplating.

Through its exquisitely marked and transparent skin he could perceive the action of the creature's heart, and saw that it was beating violently, in the agony of fear caused to the animal by its imprisonment in his hand. As he looked on it, and thought how continually a being so timid must be thwarted in its humble anxieties, in its small efforts, in its little journeys from one patch of grass to another, by a hundred obstacles, which, trifles though they might be to animals of a higher species, were yet of fatal importance to creatures constituted like itself, he began to find an imperfect, yet remarkable, analogy between his own destiny and that of this small unit of creation. He felt that, in its petty sphere, the short life of the humble animal before him must have been the prey of crosses and disappointments, as serious to it, as the more severe and destructive afflictions of which *he*, in *his* existence, had been the victim; and, as he watched the shadow-like movement of the little fluttering heart of the lizard, he experienced a cruel pleasure in perceiving that there were other beings in the creation, even down to the most insignificant, who inherited a part of *his* misery, and suffered a portion of *his* despair.

Ere long, however, his emotions took a sterner and a darker hue. The sight of the animal wearied him, and he flung it contemptuously aside. It disappeared in the direction of the ramparts; and almost at the

same moment he heard a slight sound, resembling the falling of several minute particles of brick or light stone, which seemed to come from the wall behind him.

That such a noise should proceed from so massive a structure appeared unaccountable. He rose, and, parting the bushes before him, advanced close to the surface of the lofty wall. To his astonishment, he found that the brickwork had in many places so completely mouldered away, that he could move it easily with his fingers. The cause of the trifling noise that he had heard was now fully explained: hundreds of lizards had made their homes between the fissures of the bricks; the animal that he had permitted to escape had taken refuge in one of these cavities, and in the hurry of its flight had detached several of the loose crumbling fragments that surrounded its hiding-place.

Not content, however, with the discovery he had already made, he retired a little, and, looking steadfastly up through some trees which in this particular place grew at the foot of the wall, he saw that its surface was pierced in many places by great irregular rifts, some of which extended nearly to its whole height. In addition to this, he perceived that the mass of the structure at one particular point, leaned considerably out of the perpendicular. Astounded at what he beheld, he took a stick from the ground and inserting it in one of the lowest and smallest of the cracks easily succeeded in forcing it entirely into the wall,

part of which seemed to be hollow, and part composed of the same rotten brickwork which had at first attracted his attention.

It was now evident that the whole structure, over a breadth of several yards, had been either weakly and carelessly built, or had at some former period suffered a sudden and violent shock. He left the stick in the wall to mark the place; and was about to retire, when he heard the footstep of the sentinel on the rampart immediately above. Suddenly cautious, though from what motive he would have been at that moment hardly able to explain, he remained in the concealment of the trees and bushes, until the guard had passed onward; then he cautiously emerged from the place; and, retiring to some distance, fell into a train of earnest and absorbing thought.

To account to the reader for the phenomenon which now engrossed the Pagan's attention, it will be necessary to make a brief digression to the history of the walls of Rome.

The circumference of the first fortifications of the city, built by Romulus, was thirteen miles. The greater part, however, of this large area was occupied by fields and gardens, which it was the object of the founder of the empire to preserve for arable purposes, from the incursions of the different enemies by whom he was threatened from without. As Rome gradually increased in size, its walls were progressively enlarged and altered by subsequent rulers. But it was not until the reign of the Emperor Aurelian (A.D. 270), that any

extraordinary or important change was effected in the defences of the city. That potentate commenced the erection of walls, twenty-one miles in circumference, which were finally completed in the reign of Probus (A.D.276), were restored by Belisarius (A.D.537), and are to be seen in detached portions, in the fortifications of the modern city, to the present day.

At the date of our story, then (A.D.408), the walls remained precisely as they had been constructed in the reigns of Aurelian and Probus. They were for the most part made of brick; and in a few places, probably, a sort of soft sandstone might have been added to the pervading material. At several points in their circumference, and particularly in the part behind the Pincian Hill, these walls were built in arches, forming deep recesses, and occasionally disposed in double rows. The method of building employed in their erection, was generally that mentioned by Vitruvius, in whose time it originated, as "opus reticulatum."

The "opus reticulatum" was composed of small bricks (or stones) set together on their angles, instead of horizontally, and giving the surface of a wall the appearance of a sort of solid net-work. This was considered by some architects of antiquity a perishable mode of construction; and Vitruvius asserts that some buildings where he had seen it used, had fallen down. From the imperfect specimens of it which remain in modern times, it would be difficult to decide upon its merits. That it was assuredly insufficient to support the weight of the bank of the Pincian Mount, which

rose immediately behind it, in the solitary spot described some pages back, is still made evident by the appearance of the wall at that part of the city, which remains in modern times bent out of the perpendicular, and cracked in some places almost from top to bottom. This ruin is now known to the present race of Italians, under the expressive title of "Il Muro Torto," or, The Crooked Wall.

We may here observe that it is extremely improbable that the existence of this natural breach in the fortifications of Rome was noticed, or if noticed, regarded with the slightest anxiety or attention by the majority of the careless and indolent inhabitants, at the period of the present romance. It is supposed to have been visible as early as the time of Aurelian, but is only particularly mentioned by Procopius, an historian of the sixth century, who relates that Belisarius, in strengthening the city against a siege of the Goths, attempted to repair this weak point in the wall, but was hindered in his intended labour by the devout populace, who declared that it was under the peculiar protection of St. Peter, and that it would be consequently impious to meddle with it. The general submitted without remonstrance to the decision of the inhabitants, and found no cause afterwards to repent of his facility of compliance; for, to use the translated words of the writer above-mentioned, "During the siege neither the enemy nor the Romans regarded this place." It is to be supposed that so extraordinary an event as this, gave the wall that sacred character,

which deterred subsequent rulers from attempting its repair; which permitted it to remain crooked and rent through the convulsions of the middle ages; and which still preserves it, to attest the veracity of historians, by appealing to the antiquarian curiosity of the traveller of modern times.

We now return to Ulpius. It is a peculiarity observable in the characters of men living under the ascendancy of one ruling idea, that they intuitively distort whatever attracts their attention in the outer world, into a connection more or less intimate with the single object of their mental contemplation. Since the time when he had been exiled from the Temple, the Pagan's faculties had, unconsciously to himself, acted solely in reference to the daring design which it was the business of his whole existence to entertain. Influenced, therefore, by this obliquity of moral feeling, he had scarcely reflected on the discovery that he had just made at the base of the city wall, ere his mind instantly reverted to the ambitious meditations which had occupied it in the morning; and the next moment, the first dawning conception of a bold and perilous project began to absorb his restless thoughts.

He reflected on the peculiarities and position of the wall before him. Although the widest and most important of the rents which he had observed in it, existed too near the rampart to be reached without the assistance of a ladder, there were others as low as the ground, which he knew, by the result of the trial he had already made, might be successfully and

immensely widened by the most ordinary exertion and perseverance. The interior of the wall, if judged by the condition of the surface, could offer no insuperable obstacles to an attempt at penetration so partial as to be limited to a height and width of a few feet. The ramparts, from their position between two guard-houses, would be unencumbered by an inquisitive populace. The sentinel, within the limits of whose allotted watch it happened to fall, would, when night came on, be the only human being likely to pass the spot; and at such an hour his attention must necessarily be fixed — in the circumstances under which the city was now placed — on the prospect beyond rather than on the ground below and behind him. It seemed, therefore, almost a matter of certainty, that a cautious man, labouring under cover of the night, might pursue whatever investigations he pleased at the base of the wall.

He examined the ground where he now stood. Nothing could be more lonely than its present appearance. The private gardens on the hill above it shut out all communication from that quarter. It could only be approached by the foot-path that ran round the Pincian Mount, and along the base of the walls. In the state of affairs now existing in the city, it was not probable that any one would seek this solitary place, whence nothing could be seen, and where little could be heard, in preference to mixing with the spirit-stirring confusion in the streets, or observing the Gothic encampment from such positions on the ramparts

as were easily attainable to all. In addition to the secrecy offered by the loneliness of this patch of ground to whatever employments were undertaken on it, was the further advantage afforded by the trees and thickets which covered its lower end, and which would effectually screen an intruder, during the darkness of night, from the most penetrating observation directed from the wall above.

Reflecting thus, he doubted not that a cunning and determined man might with impunity so far widen any one of the inferior breaches in the lower part of the wall as to make a cavity (large enough to admit a human figure) that should pierce to its outer surface, and afford that liberty of departing from the city and penetrating the Gothic camp which the closed gates now denied to all the inhabitants alike. To discover the practicability of such an attempt as this was, to a mind filled with such aspirations as the Pagan's, to determine irrevocably on its immediate execution. He resolved as soon as night approached to begin his labours on the wall; to seek — if the breach were made good, and the darkness favoured him — the tent of Alaric; and once arrived there, to acquaint the Gothic King with the weakness of the materials for defence within the city, and the dilapidated condition of the fortifications below the Pincian Mount, insisting, as the condition of his treachery, on an assurance from the barbarian leader (which he doubted not would be gladly and instantly accorded) of the destruction of the Christian churches, the pillage of

the Christian possessions, and the massacre of the Christian priests.

He retired cautiously from the lonely place that had now become the centre of his new hopes; and entering the streets of the city, proceeded to provide himself with an instrument that would facilitate his approaching labours, and food that would give him strength to prosecute his intended efforts, unthreatened by the hindrance of fatigue. As he thought on the daring treachery of his project, his morning's exultation began to return to him again. All his previous attempts to organise the restoration of Paganism sunk into sudden insignificance before his present design. His defence of the Temple of Serapis, his conspiracy at Alexandria, his intrigue with Vetrico, were the efforts of a man; but this projected destruction of the priests, the churches, and the treasures of a whole city, through the agency of a mighty army, moved by the unaided machinations of a single individual, would be the dazzling achievement of a god!

The hours loitered slowly onward. The sun waned in the gorgeous heaven, and set, surrounded by red and murky clouds. Then came silence and darkness. The Gothic watch-fires flamed one by one into the dusky air. The guards were doubled at the different posts. The populace were driven from the ramparts, and the fortifications of the great city echoed to no sound now but the tramp of the restless sentinel, or the clash of arms from the distant guard-houses that dotted the long line of the lofty walls.

It was then that Ulpius, passing cautiously along the least-frequented streets, gained unnoticed the place of his destination. A thick vapour lay over the lonely and marshy spot. Nothing was now visible from it but the dim, uncertain outline of the palaces above, and the mass, so sunk in obscurity that it looked like a dark layer of mist itself, of the rifted fortifications. A smile of exultation passed over the Pagan's countenance, as he perceived the shrouding and welcome thickness of the atmosphere. Groping his way softly through the thickets, he arrived at the base of the wall. For some time he passed slowly along it, feeling the width of the different rents wherever he could stretch his hand. At length he paused at one more extensive than the rest, drew from its concealment in his garments a thick bar of iron sharpened at one end, and began to labour at the breach.

Chance had led him to the place best adapted to his purpose. The ground he stood on was only encumbered close to the wall by rank weeds and low thickets, and was principally composed of damp, soft turf. The bricks, therefore, as he carefully detached them, made no greater noise in falling than the slight rustling caused by their sudden contact with the boughs through which they descended. Insignificant as this sound was, it aroused the apprehension of the wary Pagan. He laid down his iron bar, and removed the thickets by dragging them up, or breaking them at the roots, until he had cleared a space of some feet in extent before the base of the wall. He then returned

to his toilsome task, and with hands bleeding from the wounds inflicted by the thorns he had grasped in removing the thickets continued his labour at the brick-work. He pursued his employment with perfect impunity; the darkness covered him from observation; no one disturbed him by approaching the solitary scene of his operations; and of the two sentinels who were placed near the part of the wall which was the centre of all his exertions, one remained motionless at the most distant extremity of his post, and the other paced restlessly backwards and forwards on the rampart, singing a wild, rambling song about war, and women, and wine, which, whatever liberty it might allow to his organs of perception, effectually hindered the vigilant exercise of his faculties of hearing.

Brick after brick yielded to the vigorous and well-timed efforts of Ulpus. He had already made a cavity, in an oblique direction, large enough to creep through, and was preparing to penetrate still further, when a portion of the rotten material of the interior of the wall suddenly yielded in a mass to a chance pressure of his iron bar, and slowly sunk down inwards into a bed which, judging by such faint sounds as were audible at the moment, must have been partly water, and partly marshy earth and rotten brick-work. After having first listened, to be sure that the slight noise caused by this event had not reached the ears or excited the suspicions of the careless sentinels, Ulpus crept into the cavity he had made, groping his way with his bar, until he reached the brink of a chasm,

the depth of which he could not probe, and the breadth of which he could not ascertain.

He lingered irresolute; the darkness around him was impenetrable; he could feel toads and noisome animals crawling over his limbs. The damp atmosphere of the place began to thrill through him to his very bones; his whole frame trembled under the excess of his past exertions. Without light, he could neither attempt to proceed, nor hope to discover the size and extent of the chasm which he had partially laid open. The mist was fast vanishing as the night advanced: it was necessary to arrive at a resolution ere it would be too late.

He crept out of the cavity. Just as he had gained the open air, the sentinel halted over the very spot where the Pagan stood, and paused suddenly in his song. There was an instant's interval of silence, during which the inmost soul of Ulpus quailed beneath an apprehension as vivid, as that which had throbbed in the heart of the despised lizard, whose flight had guided him to his discovery at the wall. Soon, however, he heard the voice of the soldier calling cheerfully to his fellow sentinel, "Comrade, do you see the moon? She is rising to cheer our watch!"

Nothing had been discovered! — he was still safe! But if he stayed at the cavity till the mists faded before the moonlight, could he be certain of preserving his security! He felt that he could not!

What mattered a night more or a night less, to such a project as his? Months might elapse before

the Goths retired from the walls. It was better to suffer delay than to risk discovery. He determined to leave the place, and to return on the following night provided with a lantern, the light of which he would conceal until he entered the cavity. Once there, it could not be perceived by the sentinels above — it would guide him through all obstacles, preserve him through all dangers. Massive as it was, he felt convinced that the interior of the wall was in as ruinous a condition as the outside. Caution and perseverance were sufficient of themselves to insure to his efforts the speediest and completest success.

He waited until the sentinel had again betaken himself to the furthest limits of his watch, and then softly gathering up the brushwood that lay round him, he concealed with it the mouth of the cavity in the outer wall, and the fragments of brick-work that had fallen on the turf beneath. This done, he again listened, to assure himself that he had been unobserved; then, stepping with the utmost caution, he departed by the path that led round the slope of the Pincian Hill.

“Strength — patience — and to-morrow night!” muttered the Pagan to himself, as he entered the streets, and congregated once more with the citizens of Rome.

CHAPTER XI.

Goisvintha's Return.

It was morning. The sun had risen, but his beams were partially obscured by thick heavy clouds, which scowled already over the struggling brightness of the eastern horizon. The bustle and animation of the new day gradually overspread the Gothic encampment in all directions. The only tent whose curtain remained still closed, and round which no busy crowds congregated in discussion or mingled in labour, was that of Hermanric. By the dying embers of his watchfire stood the young chieftain, with two warriors, to whom he appeared to be giving some hurried directions. His countenance expressed emotions of anxiety and discontent, which, though partially repressed while he was in the presence of his companions, became thoroughly visible, not only in his features, but in his manner, when they left him to watch alone before his tent.

For some time he walked regularly backwards and forwards, looking anxiously down the westward lines of the encampment, and occasionally whispering to himself a hasty exclamation of doubt and impatience. With the first breath of the new morning, the delightful meditations which had occupied him by his watchfire during the darkness of the night had begun to subside. And now, as the hour of her expected return gradually approached, the image of Goisvintha banished from his mind whatever remained of those peaceful

and happy contemplations in which he had hitherto been absorbed. The more he thought on his fatal promise — on the nation of Antonina — on his duties to the army and the people to whom he belonged, the more doubtful appeared to him his chance of permanently protecting the young Roman without risking his degradation as a Goth, and his ruin as a warrior; and the more sternly and ominously rang in his ears the unassailable truth of Goisvintha's parting taunt — "You *must* remember your promise, you cannot save her if you would!"

Wearied of persisting in deliberations which only deepened his melancholy and increased his doubts; bent on sinking in a temporary and delusive oblivion the boding reflections that overcame him in spite of himself, by seeking — while its enjoyment was yet left to him — the society of his ill-fated charge, he turned towards his tent, drew aside the thick, heavy curtains of skins which closed its opening, and approached the rude couch on which Antonina was still sleeping.

A ray of sunlight, fitful and struggling, burst at this moment through the heavy clouds, and stole into the opening of the tent as he contemplated the slumbering girl. It ran its flowing course up her uncovered hand and arm, flew over her bosom and neck, and bathed in a bright fresh glow, her still and reposing features. Gradually her limbs began to move, her lips parted gently and half smiled, as if in welcome to the greeting of the light; her eyes slightly opened,

then dazzled by the brightness that flowed through their raised lids, tremblingly closed again. At length thoroughly awakened, she shaded her face with her hands, and sitting up on the couch, met the gaze of Hermanric fixed on her in sorrowful examination.

“Your bright armour, and your glorious name, and your merciful words, have remained with me even in my sleep,” said she, wonderingly; “and now, when I awake, I see you before me again! It is a happiness to be aroused by the sun which has gladdened me all my life, to look upon *you* who have given me shelter in my distress! But why,” she continued, in altered and enquiring tones, “why do you gaze upon me with doubting and mournful eyes?”

“You have slept well and safely,” said Hermanric, evasively, “I closed the opening of the tent to preserve you from the night-damps, but I have raised it now, for the air is warming under the rising sun —”

“Are you wearied with watching?” she interrupted, rising to her feet, and looking anxiously into his face. But he spoke not in reply. His head was turned towards the door of the tent. He seemed to be listening for some expected sound. It was evident that he had not heard her question. She followed the direction of his eyes. The sight of the great city, half brightened, half darkened, as its myriad buildings reflected the light of the sun, or retained the shadows of the clouds, brought back to her remembrance her last night's petition for her father's safety. She laid

her hand upon her companion's arm to awaken his attention, and hastily resumed: —

“You have not forgotten what I said to you last night? My father's name is Numerian. He lives on the Pincian Mount. You will save him, Hermanric—you will save him! You will remember your promise!”

The young warrior's eyes fell as she spoke, and an irrepressible shudder shook his whole frame. The last part of Antonina's address to him, was expressed in the same terms as a past appeal from other lips, and in other accents, which still clung to his memory. The same demand, “*Remember your promise,*” which had been advanced to urge him to bloodshed, by Goisvintha, was now proffered by Antonina, to lure him to pity. The petition of affection was concluded in the same terms as the petition of revenge. As he thought on both, the human pity of the one, and the fiend-like cruelty of the other, rose in sinister and significant contrast on the mind of the Goth, realising in all its perils the struggle that was to come when Goisvintha returned, and dispelling instantaneously the last hopes that he had yet ventured to cherish for the fugitive at his side.

“No assault of the city is commanded — no assault is intended. Your father's life is safe from the swords of the Goths,” he gloomily replied, in answer to Antonina's last words.

The girl moved back from him a few steps as he spoke, and looked thoughtfully round the tent. The battle-axe that Hermanric had secured during the

scene of the past evening, still lay on the ground, in a corner. The sight of it brought back a flood of terrible recollections to her mind. She started violently; a sudden change overspread her features, and when she again addressed Hermanric, it was with quivering lips and in almost inarticulate words.

“I know now why you look on me so gloomily,” said she; “that woman is coming back! I was so occupied by my dreams and my thoughts of my father and of you, and my hopes for days to come, that I had forgotten her when I awoke! But I remember all now! She is coming back — I see it in your sorrowful eyes — she is coming back to murder me! I shall die at the moment when I had such hope in my life! There is no happiness for me! None! — none!”

The Goth's countenance began to darken. He whispered to himself several times, “How can I save her?” For a few minutes there was a deep silence, broken only by the sobs of Antonina. He looked round at her after an interval. She held her hands clasped over her eyes. The tears were streaming through her parted fingers; her bosom heaved as if her emotions would burst their way through it in some palpable form; and her limbs trembled so, that she could scarcely support herself. Unconsciously, as he looked on her, he passed his arm round her slender form, drew her hands gently from her face, and said to her, though his heart belied his words as he spoke, “Do not be afraid — trust in me!”

“How can I be calm?” she cried, looking up at him entreatingly; “I was so happy last night, so sure that you could preserve me, so hopeful about to-morrow — and now I see by your mournful looks, I know by your doubting voice, that to soothe my anguish you have promised me more than you can perform! The woman who is your companion, has a power over us both, that it is terrible even to think of! She will return, she will withdraw all mercy from your heart, she will glare upon me with her fearful eyes, she will kill me at your feet! I shall die after all I have suffered and all I have hoped! Oh, Hermanric, while there is yet time let us escape! *You* were not made to shed blood — *you* are too merciful! God never made you to destroy! You cannot yearn towards cruelty and woe, for you have aided and protected *me*! Let us escape! I will follow you wherever you wish! I will do whatever you ask! I will go with you beyond those far, bright mountains behind us, to any strange and distant land; for there is beauty everywhere; there are woods that may be dwelt in, and valleys that may be loved, on all the surface of this wide, great earth!”

The Goth looked sadly on her as she paused; but he gave her no answer — the gloom was deepening over his heart — the false words of consolation were silenced on his lips.

“Think how many pleasures we should enjoy, how much we might see!” continued the girl, in soft, appealing tones. “We should be free to wander where-

ever we pleased; we should never be lonely; never be mournful; never be wearied! I could listen to you day after day, while you told me of the country where your people were born! I could sing you sweet songs that I have learned upon the lute! Oh, how I have wept in my loneliness to lead such a life as this! How I have longed that such freedom and joy might be mine! How I have thought of the distant lands that I would visit, of the happy nations that I would discover, of the mountain breezes that I would breathe, of the shady places that I would repose in, of the rivers that I would follow in their course, of the flowers I would plant, and the fruits I would gather! How I have hoped for such an existence as this! How I have longed for a companion who might enjoy it as I should! Have you never felt this joy that I have imagined to myself, you who have been free to wander wherever you pleased? Let us leave this place, and I will teach it to you if you have not. I will be so patient, so obedient, so happy! I will never be sorrowful; never repining — but let us escape — Oh, Hermanric, let us escape while there is yet time! Will you keep me here to be slain? Can you drive me forth into the world alone? Remember that the gates of the city and the doors of my home are now closed to me! Remember that I have no mother, and that my father has forsaken me! Remember that I am a stranger on the earth which was made for me to be joyful in! Think how soon the woman who has vowed that she will murder me will return; think how terrible

it is to be in the fear of death; and while there is time let us depart — Hermanric, Hermanric, if you have pity for me, let us depart!”

She clasped her hands, and looked up in his face imploringly. The manner of Hermanric had expressed more to her senses, sharpened as they were by peril, than his words could have conveyed, even had he confessed to her the cause of the emotions of doubt and apprehension that oppressed his mind. Nothing could more strikingly testify to the innocence of her character and the seclusion of her life, than her attempt to combine with her escape from Goisvintha's fury, the acquisition of such a companion as the Goth. But to the forlorn and affectionate girl who saw herself — a stranger to the laws of the social existence of her fellow creatures — suddenly thrust forth friendless into the unfriendly world, could the heart have naturally prompted any other desire, than anxiety to secure the companion after having discovered the protector? In the guilelessness of her character, in her absolute ignorance of humanity, of the influence of custom, of the adaptation of difference of feeling to difference of sex, she vainly imagined that the tranquil existence she had urged on Hermanric, would suffice for the attainment of her end, by presenting the same allurements to him, a warrior and a Goth, that it contained for her — a lonely, thoughtful, visionary girl! And yet, so wonderful was the ascendancy that she had acquired by the magic of her presence, the freshness of her beauty, and the novelty of her manners,

over the heart of the young chieftain, that he, who would have spurned from him with contempt any other woman who might have addressed to him such a petition as Antonina's, looked down sorrowfully at the girl as she ceased speaking, and for an instant hesitated in his choice.

At that moment, when the attention of each was fixed on the other, a third person stealthily approached the opening of the tent, and beholding them together thus, burst into a bitter, taunting laugh. Hermanric raised his eyes instantly; but the sound of that harsh unwomanly voice was all-eloquent to Antonina's senses. She hid her face against the Goth's breast, and murmured breathlessly — "She has returned! I must die! I must die!"

She *had* returned! She perceived Hermanric and Antonina in a position, which left no doubt that a stronger feeling than the mere wish to protect the victim of her intended revenge, had arisen, during her absence, in the heart of her kinsman. Hour after hour, while she had fulfilled her duties by the beds of Alaric's invalided soldiery, had she brooded over her projects of vengeance and blood. Neither the sickness nor the death which she had beheld around her, had possessed an influence powerful enough over the stubborn ferocity which now alone animated her nature, to lure it to mercy or awe it to repentance. Invigorated by delay, and enlarged by disappointment, the evil passion that consumed her had strengthened its power, and aroused the most latent of its energies,

during the silent vigil that she had just held. She had detested the girl on the evening before, for her nation; she now hated her for herself.

“What have *you* to do with the trappings of a Gothic warrior?” she cried, in mocking accents, pointing at Hermanric with a long hunting-knife which she held in her hand. “Why are *you* here in a Gothic encampment? Go, knock at the gates of Rome, implore her guards on your knees to admit you among the citizens, and when they ask you why — show them the girl there! Tell them that you love her, that you would wed her, that it is nothing to you that her people have murdered your brother and his children! And then, when you yourself have begotten sons, Gothic bastards infected with Roman blood, be a Roman at heart yourself, send your children forth to complete what your wife’s people left undone at Aquileia — by murdering *me!*”

She paused and laughed scornfully. Then her humour suddenly changed, she advanced a few steps, and continued in a louder and sterner tone: —

“You have broken your faith; you have lied to me; you have forgotten your wrongs and mine; but you have not yet forgotten my parting words when I left you last night! I told you that she should be slain, and now that you have refused to avenge me, I will make good my words by killing her with my own hand! If you would defend *her*, you must murder *me*. You must shed *her* blood or *mine!*”

She stepped forward, her towering form was stretched

to its highest stature, the muscles started into action on her bare arms as she raised them above her head. For one instant, she fixed her glaring eyes steadily on the girl's shrinking form — the next, she rushed up and struck furiously with the knife at her bare neck. As the weapon descended, Hermanric caught her wrist. She struggled violently to disengage herself from his grasp, but in vain.

The countenance of the young warrior grew deadly pale, as he held her. For a few minutes he glanced eagerly round the tent, in an agony of bewilderment and despair. The conflicting interests of his duty towards his sister, and his anxiety for Antonina's preservation, filled his heart to distraction. A moment more he hesitated, and during that short delay, the despotism of custom had yet power enough to prevail over the promptings of pity. He called to the girl — withdrawing his arm which had hitherto been her support, — “Go, have mercy on me, go!”

But she neither heeded nor heard him. She fell on her knees at the woman's feet, and in a low moaning voice faltered out: —

“What have I done that I deserve to be slain? I never murdered your children; I never yet saw a child but I loved it; if I had seen *your* children, I should have loved *them!*”

“If I had preserved to this time the child that I saved from the massacre, and you had approached him,” returned the woman fiercely, “I would have taught him to strike at you with his little hands! When you

spoke to him, he should have spat upon you for answer — even thus!”

Trembling, exhausted, terrified as she was, the girl's Roman blood rushed over her pale cheeks as she felt the insult. She turned towards Hermanric, looked up at him appealingly, attempted to speak, and then sinking lower upon the ground, wept bitterly.

“Why do you weep and pray and mouth it at him?” shrieked Goisvintha, pointing to Hermanric with her disengaged hand. “He has neither courage to protect *you*, nor honour to aid *me*. Do you think that *I* am to be moved by your tears and entreaties? I tell you that your people have slain my husband and my children, and that I hate you for that. I tell you that you have lured Hermanric into love for a Roman and unfaithfulness to me, and I will slay you for doing it! I tell you that there is not a living thing of the blood of your country, or the name of your nation, throughout the length and breadth of this empire, that I would not destroy if I had the power! If the very trees on the road hither could have had feeling, I would have torn the bark from their stems with my own hands! If a bird, native of your skies, had flown into my bosom from very tameness and sport, I would have crushed it dead at my feet! And do you think that *you* shall escape? Do you think that I will not avenge the deaths of my husband and my children upon *you*, after this?”

As she spoke, she mechanically unclenched her hands. The knife dropped to the ground. Hermanric instantly stooped and secured it. For a moment she

stood before him released from his grasp, motionless and speechless. Then, starting as if struck by a sudden idea, she moved towards the opening of the tent, and, in tones of malignant triumph, addressed him thus: —

“You shall not save her yet! You are unworthy of your nation and your name! I will betray your cowardice and treachery to your brethren in the camp!” And she ran to the outside of the tent, calling in a loud voice to a group of young warriors who happened to be passing at a short distance. “Stay! stay! Fritigern — Athanaric — Colias — Suerid — Witheric — Fravitta! Hasten hitherward! Hermanric has a captive in his tent — a prisoner whom it will rejoice you to see! Hitherward! hitherward!”

The group she addressed contained some of the most turbulent and careless spirits of the whole Gothic army. They had just been released from their duties of the past night, and were at leisure to comply with Goisvintha's request. She had scarcely concluded her address before they turned and hurried eagerly up to the tent, shouting to Hermanric, as they advanced, to make his prisoner visible to them in the open air.

They had probably expected to be regaled by the ludicrous terror of some Roman slave whom their comrade had discovered lurking in the empty suburbs; for when they entered the tent, and saw nothing but the shrinking figure of the unhappy girl, as she crouched on the earth at Hermanric's feet, they all paused with one accord, and looked round on each other in speechless astonishment.

“Behold her!” cried Goisvintha, breaking the momentary silence. “She is the Roman prisoner that your man of valour there has secured for himself! For that trembling child he has forgotten the enmities of his people! She is more to him already than army, general, or companions. *You* have watched before the city during the night; but *he* has stood sentinel by the maiden of Rome! Hope not that he will share in your toils, or mix in your pleasures more. Alaric and the warriors have lost his services — his future king cringes there at his feet!”

She had expected to arouse the anger and excite the jealousy of the rough audience she addressed; but the result of her envenomed jeers disappointed her hopes. The humour of the moment prompted the Goths to ridicule, a course infinitely more inimical to Antonina’s interests with Hermanric than menaces or re- crimination. Recovered from their first astonishment, they burst into a loud and universal laugh.

“Mars and Venus caught together! But, by St. Peter, I see not Vulcan and the net!” cried Fravitta, who having served in the armies of Rome, and acquired a vague knowledge there of the ancient mythology, and the modern politics of the Empire, was considered by his companions as the wit of the battalion to which he was attached.

“I like her figure,” growled Fritigern, a heavy, phlegmatic giant, renowned for his imperturbable good humour and his prowess in drinking. “What little there is of it looks so limp that Hermanric might pack

her into his light baggage and carry her about with him on his shoulders wherever he goes!"

"By which process you would say, old sucker of wine-skins, that he will attain the double advantage of always keeping her to himself, and always keeping her warm," interrupted Colias, a ruddy, reckless boy of sixteen, privileged to be impertinent in consideration of his years.

"Is she Orthodox or Arian?" gravely demanded Athanaric, who piqued himself on his theological accomplishments and his extraordinary piety.

"What hair she has!" exclaimed Suerid, sarcastically. "It is as black as the horse-hides of a squadron of Huns!"

"Show us her face! Whose tent will she visit next?" cried Witheric, with an insolent laugh.

"Mine!" replied Fritigern, complacently. "What says the chorus of the song?"

'Money and wine
Make beauty mine!'

I have more of both than any of you. She will come to *my* tent!"

During the delivery of these clumsy jests, which followed one upon another with instantaneous rapidity, the scorn at first expressed in Hermanric's countenance became gradually replaced by a look of irrepressible anger. As Fritigern spoke, he lost all command over himself, and seizing his sword, advanced threateningly towards the easy-tempered giant, who made no attempt to recede or defend himself, but called out soothingly, "Patience, man! patience! Would you kill an old

comrade for jesting? I envy you your good luck as a friend, not as an enemy!"

Yielding to the necessity of lowering his sword before a defenceless man, Hermanric was about to reply angrily to Fritigern, when his voice was drowned in the blast of a trumpet, sounding close by the tent. The signal that it gave was understood at once by the group of jesters still surrounding the young Goth. They turned, and retired without an instant's delay. The last of their number had scarcely disappeared, when the same veteran who had spoken with Hermanric, on the departure of Goisvintha the evening before, entered and thus addressed him: —

"You are commanded to post yourself with the division that now awaits you, at a place eastward of your present position, which will be shown you by a guide. Make ready at once — you have not an instant to delay."

As the words passed the old man's lips, Hermanric turned and looked on Goisvintha. During the presence of the Goths in the tent, she had sat listening to their rough jeers in suppressed wrath and speechless disdain; now she rose and advanced a few steps. But there suddenly appeared an unwonted hesitation in her gait; her face was pale; she breathed fast and heavily. "Where will you shelter her now?" she cried, addressing Hermanric, and threatening the girl with her outstretched hands. "Abandon her to your companions, or leave her to me; she is lost either way! I shall triumph — triumph!" —

At this moment her voice sank to an unintelligible murmur; she tottered where she stood. It was evident that the long strife of passions during her past night of watching, and the fierce and varying emotions of the morning, suddenly brought to a crisis, as they had been, by her exultation when she heard the old warrior's fatal message, had at length overtaken the energies even of *her* powerful frame. Yet one moment more she endeavoured to advance, to speak, to snatch the hunting knife from Hermanric's hand; the next she fell insensible at his feet.

Goaded almost to madness by the successive trials that he had undergone; Goisvintha's furious determination to thwart him, still present to his mind; the scornful words of his companions yet ringing in his ears; his inexorable duties demanding his attention without reserve or delay; Hermanric succumbed at last under the difficulties of his position, and despairingly abandoned all further hope of effecting the girl's preservation. Pointing to some food that lay in a corner of the tent, and to the country behind, he said to her, in broken and gloomy accents, "Furnish yourself with those provisions, and fly, while Goisvintha is yet unable to pursue you. I can protect you no longer!"

Until this moment, Antonina had kept her face hidden, and had remained still crouching on the ground; motionless, save when a shudder ran through her frame as she listened to the loud, coarse jesting of the Goths; and speechless, except that when Goisvintha sank senseless to the earth, she uttered an ex-

clamation of terror. But now, when she heard the sentence of her banishment proclaimed by the very lips which but the evening before had assured her of shelter and protection, she rose up instantly, cast on the young Goth a glance of such speechless misery and despair, that he involuntarily quailed before it; and then, without a tear or a sigh, without a look of reproach, or a word of entreaty, petrified and bowed down beneath a perfect trance of terror and grief, she left the tent.

Hurrying his actions with the reckless energy of a man determined on banishing his thoughts by his employments, Hermanric placed himself at the head of his troop, and marched quickly onwards in an eastward direction past the Pincian Gate. Two of his attendants who happened to enter the tent after his departure, observing Goisvintha still extended on the earth, proceeded to transport her to part of the camp occupied by the women who were attached to the army; and then, the little sheltering canopy which made the abode of the Goth, and which had witnessed so large a share of human misery and so fierce a war of human contention in so few hours, was left as silent and lonely as the deserted country in which Antonina was now fated to seek a refuge and a home.

CHAPTER XII.

The Passage of the Wall.

"A FAIR night this, Balbus! All moonlight and no mist! I was posted last evening at the Ostian Gate, and was half choked by the fog."

"If you were posted last night at the Ostian gate, you were better placed than you are now. The ramparts here are as lonely as a ruin in the provinces. Nothing behind us but the back of the Pincian Mount; nothing before us but the empty suburbs; nothing at each side of us but brick and stone; nothing at our posts but ourselves. May I be crucified like St. Peter, if I believe that there is another place on the whole round of the walls possessed of such solitary dulness as this!"

"You are a man to find something to complain of, if you were lodged in one of the palaces yonder. The place is solitary enough, it is true; but whether it is dull or not depends on ourselves, its most honourable occupants. I, for one, am determined to promote its joviality by the very praiseworthy exertion of obliging you, my discontented friend, with an inexhaustible series of those stories for which, I may say, without arrogance, I am celebrated throughout the length and breadth of all the barracks of Rome."

"You may tell as many stories as you please, but do not imagine that I will make one of your audience."

"You are welcome to attend to me or not, as you

choose. Though you do not listen, I shall still relate my stories by way of practice. I will address them to the walls, or to the air, or to the defunct gods and goddesses of antiquity, should they happen at this moment to be hovering over the city in a rage, as some of the unconverted would have us believe; or to our neighbours the Goths, if they are seized with a sudden desire to quit their encampments, and obtain a near view of the fortifications that they are so discreetly unwilling to assault. Or, these materials for a fit and decent auditory failing me, I will tell my stories to the most attentive of all listeners — myself.”

And the sentinel, without further delay, opened his budget of anecdotes, with the easy fluency of a man who possessed a well-placed confidence in the perfection of his capacities for narration. Determined that his saturnine comrade should hear him, though he would not give him his attention, he talked in a raised voice, pacing briskly backwards and forwards over the space of his allotted limits, and laughing with ludicrous regularity and complacency at every jest that he happened to make in the course of his ill-rewarded narrative. He little thought, as he continued to proceed in his tale, that its commencement had been welcomed by an unseen hearer, with emotions widely different from those which had dictated the observations of the unfriendly companion of his watch.

True to his determination, Ulpius, with part of the wages which he had hoarded in Numerian's service,

had procured a small lantern from a shop in one of the distant quarters of Rome; and veiling its light in a piece of coarse, thick cloth, had proceeded by the solitary pathway to his second night's labour at the wall. He arrived at the breach, at the commencement of the dialogue above related, and heard with delight the sentinel's noisy resolution to amuse his companion in spite of himself. The louder and the longer the man talked, the less probable was the chance that the Pagan's labours in the interior of the wall would be suspected or overheard.

Softly clearing away the brushwood at the entrance of the hole that he had made the night before, Ulpius crept in as far as he had penetrated on that occasion; and then, with mingled emotions of expectation and apprehension which affected him so powerfully, that he was for the moment hardly master of his actions, he slowly and cautiously uncovered his light.

His first glance was intuitively directed to the cavity that opened beneath him. He saw immediately that it was less important, both in size and depth, than he had imagined it to be. The earth at this particular place had given way beneath the foundations of the wall, which had sunk down, deepening the chasm by their weight, into the yielding ground beneath them. A small spring of water (probably the first cause of the sinking in the earth) had bubbled up into the space in the brick-work, which bit by bit, and year by year, it had gradually undermined. Nor did

it remain stagnant at this place. It trickled merrily and quietly onward — a tiny rivulet, emancipated from one prison in the ground only to enter another in the wall, bounded by no grassy banks, brightened by no cheerful light, admired by no human eye, followed in its small course through the inner fissures in the brick by no living thing but a bloated toad, or a solitary lizard: yet wending as happily on its way through darkness and ruin, as its sisters who were basking in the sunlight of the meadow, or leaping in the fresh breezes of the open mountain side.

Raising his eyes from the little spring, Ulpus next directed his attention to the prospect above him.

Immediately over his head, the material of the interior of the wall presented a smooth, flat, hard surface, which seemed capable of resisting the most vigorous attempts at its destruction; but on looking round, he perceived at one side of him and further inwards, an appearance of dark, dimly-defined irregularity, which promised encouragingly for his intended efforts. He descended into the chasm of the rivulet, crawled up on a heap of crumbling brickwork, and gained a hole above it, which he immediately began to widen, to admit of his passage through. Inch by inch, he enlarged the rift, crept into it, and found himself on a fragment of the bow of one of the foundation arches, which, though partly destroyed, still supported itself, isolated from all connection with the part of the upper wall which it had once sustained, and which had gradually crumbled away into the cavities below.

He looked up. An immense rift soared above him, stretching its tortuous ramifications, at different points, into every part of the wall that was immediately visible. The whole structure seemed, at this place, to have received a sudden and tremendous wrench. But for the support of the sounder fortifications at each side of it, it could not have sustained itself after the shock. The Pagan gazed aloft, into the fearful breaches which yawned above him, with ungovernable awe. His small, fitful light was not sufficient to show him any of their terminations. They looked, as he beheld them in dark relief against the rest of the hollow part of the wall, like mighty serpents twining their desolating path right upward to the ramparts above; and he, himself, as he crouched on his pinnacle with his little light by his side, was reduced by the wild grandeur, the vast, solemn gloom of the obscure, dusky, and fantastic objects around him, to the stature of a pigmy. Could he have been seen from the ramparts high overhead, as he now peered down behind his lantern into the cavities and irregularities below him, he would have looked, with his flickering light, like a mole led by a glow-worm.

He paused to consider his next movements. In a stationary position, the damp coldness of the atmosphere was almost insupportable, but he attained a great advantage by his present stillness: he could listen undisturbed by the noises made by the bricks which crumbled from under him, if he advanced.

Ere long, he heard a thin, winding, long-drawn

sound, now louder, now softer; now approaching, now retreating; now verging towards shrillness, now quickly returning to a faint, gentle swell. Suddenly this strange unearthly music was interrupted by a succession of long, deep, rolling sounds, which travelled grandly about the fissures above, like prisoned thunderbolts striving to escape. Utterly ignorant that the first of these noises was occasioned by the night wind winding through the rents in the brick of the outer wall beyond him; and the second by the echoes produced in the irregular cavities above, by the footfall of the sentries overhead — roused by the influence of the place, and the mystery of his employment, to a pitch of fanatic exaltation, which for the moment absolutely unsteadied his reason — filled with the frantic enthusiasm of his designs, and the fearful legends of invisible beings and worlds which made the foundation of his worship, Ulpus conceived, as he listened to the sounds around and above, that the gods of antiquity were now in viewless congregation hovering about him, and calling to him in unearthly voices and in an unknown tongue, to proceed upon his daring enterprise, in the full assurance of its near and glorious success.

“Roar and mutter, and make your hurricane music in my ears!” exclaimed the Pagan, raising his withered hands, and addressing in a savage ecstasy his imagined deities. “Your servant Ulpus stops not on the journey that leads him to your re-peopled shrines! Blood, crime, danger, pain — pride and honour, joy and rest, have I strewn like sacrifices at your altars’ feet! Time has

whirled past me; youth and manhood have lain long since buried in the hidden Lethe which is the portion of life; age has wreathed his coils over my body's strength, but still I watch by your temples and serve your mighty cause! Your vengeance is near! Monarchs of the world, your triumph is at hand!"

He remained for some time in the same position, looking fixedly up into the trackless darkness above him, drinking in the sounds which — alternately rising and sinking — still floated round him. The trembling gleam of his lantern fell red and wild upon his livid countenance. His shaggy hair floated in the cold breezes that blew by him. At this moment he would have appeared from a distance, like a phantom of fire perishing in a mist of darkness; like a Gnome in adoration in the bowels of the earth; like a forsaken spirit in a solitary purgatory, watching for the advent of a glimpse of beauty, or a breath of air.

At length he aroused himself from his trance, trimmed with careful hand his guiding lantern, and set forward to penetrate the breadth of the great rift he had just entered.

He moved on in an oblique direction several feet, now creeping over the tops of the foundation arches, now skirting the extremities of protrusions in the ruined brickwork, now descending into dark slimy rubbish-choked chasms, until the rift suddenly diminished in all directions.

The atmosphere was warmer in the place he now

occupied; he could faintly distinguish patches of dark moss, dotted here and there over the uneven surface of the wall; and once or twice, some blades of long flat grass, that grew from a prominence immediately above his head, were waved in his face by the wind, which he could now feel blowing through the narrow fissure that he was preparing to enlarge. It was evident that he had by this time advanced to within a few feet of the outer extremity of the wall.

“Numerian wanders after his child through the streets,” muttered the Pagan, as he deposited his lantern by his side, bared his trembling arms, and raised his iron bar, “the slaves of his neighbour the senator are forth to pursue me. On all sides my enemies are out after me; but, posted here, I mock their strictest search! If they would track me to my hiding-place, they must penetrate the walls of Rome! If they would hunt me down in my lair, they must assail me to-night in the camp of the Goths! Fools! let them look to themselves! I seal the doom of their city, with the last brick that I tear from their defenceless walls!”

He laughed to himself as he thrust his bar boldly into the crevice before him. In some places the bricks yielded easily to his efforts; in others, their resistance was only to be overcome by the exertion of his utmost strength. Resolutely and unceasingly he continued his labours; now wounding his hands against the jagged surfaces presented by the widening fissure; now involuntarily dropping his instrument from ungovernable exhaustion; but, still working bravely on, in defiance

of every hindrance that opposed him, until he gained the interior of the new rift.

As he drew his lantern after him into the cavity that he had made, he perceived that, unless it was heightened immediately over him, he could proceed no further, even in a creeping position. Irritated at this unexpected necessity for more violent exertion, desperate in his determination to get through the wall at all hazards, on that very night, he recklessly struck his bar upwards with all his strength, instead of gradually and softly loosening the material of the surface that opposed him, as he had done before.

A few moments of this labour had scarcely elapsed, when a considerable portion of the brickwork, consolidated into one firm mass, fell with lightning suddenness from above. It hurled him under it, prostrate on the foundation arch which had been his support; crushed and dislocated his right shoulder; and shivered his lantern into fragments. A groan of irrepressible anguish burst from his lips. He was left in impenetrable darkness.

The mass of brickwork, after it had struck him, rolled a little to one side. By a desperate exertion he extricated himself from under it — only to swoon from the fresh anguish caused to him by the effort.

For a short time he lay insensible in his cold dark solitude. Then reviving after this first shock, he began to experience in all their severity, the fierce spasms, the dull gnawings, the throbbing torments, that were the miserable consequences of the injury he received.

His arm lay motionless by his side — he had neither strength nor resolution to move any one of the other sound limbs in his body. At one moment, his deep, sobbing, stifled respirations, syllabled horrible and half-formed curses — at another, his panting breaths suddenly died away within him; and then he could hear the blood dripping slowly from his shoulder, with dismal regularity, into a little pool that it had formed already by his side.

The shrill breezes which wound through the crevices in the wall before him, were now felt only on his wounded limb. They touched its surface like innumerable splinters of thin, sharp ice; they penetrated his flesh like rushing sparks struck out of a sea of molten lead. There were moments, during the first pangs of this agony, when, if he had been possessed of a weapon and of the strength to use it, he would have sacrificed his ambition for ever by depriving himself of life.

But this desire to end his torments with his existence lasted not long. Gradually, the anguish in his body awakened a wilder and stronger distemper in his mind, and then the two agonies, physical and mental, rioted over him together in fierce rivalry, divesting him of all thoughts but such as were by their own agency created or aroused.

For some time he lay helpless in his misery, alternately venting by stifled groans the unalleviated torment of his wounds, and lamenting with curses the failure of his enterprise, at the very moment of its

apparent success. At length, the pangs that struck through him seemed to grow gradually less frequent; he hardly knew now from what part of his frame they more immediately proceeded. Insensibly, his faculties of thinking and feeling grew blunted; then he remained a little while in a mysterious unrefreshing repose of body and mind; and then his disordered senses, left unguided and unrestrained, became the victims of a sudden and terrible delusion.

The blank darkness around him appeared, after an interval, to be gradually dawning into a dull light, thick and misty, like the reflections on clouds which threaten a thunderstorm at the close of evening. Soon, this atmosphere seemed to be crossed and streaked with a fantastic trellis-work of white, seething vapour. Then the mass of brickwork which had struck him down, grew visible at his side, enlarged to an enormous bulk, and endued with a power of self-motion, by which it mysteriously swelled and shrank, and raised and depressed itself, without quitting for a moment its position near him. And then, from its dark and toiling surface there rose a long stream of dusky shapes, which twined themselves about the misty trellis-work above, and took the prominent and palpable form of human countenances, marked by every difference of age and distorted by every variety of suffering.

There were infantine faces, wreathed about with grave worms that hung round them like locks of filthy hair; aged faces, dabbled with gore and slashed with wounds; youthful faces, seamed with livid chan-

nels, along which ran unceasing tears; lovely faces, distorted into fixed expressions of raging pain, wild malignity, and despairing gloom. Not one of these countenances exactly resembled the other. Each was distinguished by a revolting character of its own. Yet, however deformed might be their other features, the eyes of all were preserved unimpaired. Speechless and bodiless, they floated in unceasing myriads up to the fantastic trellis-work, which seemed to swell its wild proportions to receive them. There they clustered, in their goblin amphitheatre, and fixedly and silently they all glared down, without one exception, on the Pagan's face!

Meanwhile, the walls at the side began to gleam out with a light of their own, making jagged boundaries to the midway scene of phantom faces. Then the rifts in their surfaces widened, and disgorged misshapen figures of priests and idols of the old time, which came forth in every hideous deformity of aspect, mocking at the faces on the trellis-work; while behind and over the whole, soared shapes of gigantic darkness, robed in grim cloudy resemblances of skins such as were worn by the Goths, and wielding through the quivering vapour, mighty and shadow-like weapons of war. From the whole of this ghastly assemblage there rose not the slightest sound. A stillness, as of a dead and ruined world, possessed in all its quarters the appalling scene. The deep echoes of the sentries' footsteps and the faint dirging of the melancholy winds were no more. The blood that had as yet dripped

from his wound, made no sound now in the Pagan's ear; even his own agony of terror was as silent as were the visionary demons who had aroused it. Days, years, centuries, seemed to pass, as he lay gazing up, in a trance of horror, into his realm of peopled and ghostly darkness. At last nature yielded under the trial; the phantom prospect suddenly whirled round him with fearful velocity, and his senses sought refuge from the thralldom of their own creation in a deep and welcome swoon.

Time had moved wearily onward, the chiding winds had many times waved the dry locks of his hair to and fro about his brow, as if to bid him awaken and arise, ere he again recovered his consciousness. Once more aroused to the knowledge of his position and the sensation of his wound, he slowly raised himself upon his uninjured arm, and looked wildly around for the faintest appearance of a gleam of light. But the winding and uneven nature of the track which he had formed to lead him through the wall, effectually prevented the moonbeams, then floating into the outermost of the cavities that he had made, from reaching the place where he now lay. Not a single object was even faintly distinguishable around him. Darkness hemmed him in, in rayless and triumphant obscurity, on every side.

The first agonies of the injury he had received had resolved themselves into one dull, heavy, unchanging sensation of pain. The vision that had overwhelmed his senses was now, in a vast and shadowy

form, present only to his memory, filling the darkness with fearful recollections, and not with dismal forms; and urging on him a restless, headlong yearning to effect his escape from the lonely and unhallowed sepulchre, the prison of solitude and death, that his own fatal exertions threatened him with, should he linger much longer in the caverns of the wall.

“I must pass from this darkness into light — I must breathe the air of the sky, or I shall perish in the damp of this vault,” he exclaimed in a hoarse, moaning voice, as he raised himself gradually and painfully into a creeping position; and turning round slowly, commenced his meditated retreat.

His brain still whirled with the emotions that had so lately overwhelmed his mind; his right hand hung helplessly by his side, dragged after him like a prisoner's chain, and lacerated by the uneven surfaces of the ground over which it was slowly drawn, as — supporting himself on his left arm, and creeping forward a few inches at a time — he set forth on his toilsome journey.

Here, he paused bewildered in the darkness; there, he either checked himself by a convulsive effort from falling headlong into the unknown deeps beneath him, or lost the little ground he had gained in labour and agony, by retracing his way at the bidding of some unexpected obstacle. Now he gnashed his teeth in anguish, now he cursed in despair, now he was breathless with exhaustion; but still, with an obstinacy that

had in it something of the heroic, he never failed in his fierce resolution to effect his escape.

Slowly and painfully, moving with the pace and the perseverance of the tortoise, hopeless yet determined as a navigator in a strange sea, he writhed onward and onward upon his unguided course, until he reaped at length the reward of his long suffering, by the sudden discovery of a thin ray of moonlight toiling through a crevice in the murky brickwork before him. Hardly did the hearts of the Magi when the vision of "the star in the East" first dawned on their eyes, leap within them with a more vivid transport, than that which animated the heart of Ulpius at the moment when he beheld the inspiring and guiding light.

Yet a little more exertion, a little more patience, a little more anguish; and he stood once again, a ghastly and crippled figure, before the outer cavity in the wall.

It was near daybreak; the moon shone faintly in the dull, grey heaven; a small, vaporous rain was sinking from the shapeless clouds; the waning night showed bleak and cheerless to the earth, but cast no mournful or reproving influence over the Pagan's mind. He looked round on his solitary lurking place, and beheld no human figure in its lonely recesses. He looked up at the ramparts, and saw that the sentinels stood silent and apart, wrapped in their heavy watch-cloaks, and supported on their trusty weapons. It was perfectly apparent that the events of his night of suf-

fering and despair had passed unheeded by the outer world.

He glanced back with a shudder upon his wounded and helpless limb; then his eyes fixed themselves upon the wall. After surveying it with an earnest and defiant gaze, he slowly moved the brushwood with his foot, against the small cavity in its outer surface.

"Days pass, wounds heal, chances change," muttered the old man, departing from his haunt with slow and uncertain steps. "In the mines I have borne lashes without a murmur — I have felt my chains widening, with each succeeding day, the ulcers that their teeth of iron first gnawed in my flesh, and have yet lived to loosen my fetters, and to close my sores! Shall this new agony have a power to conquer me greater than the others that are past? I will even yet return in time to overcome the resistance of the wall! My arm is crushed, but my purpose is whole!"

CHAPTER XIII.

The House in the Suburbs.

RETRACING some hours, we turn from the rifted wall to the suburbs and the country which its ramparts overlook; abandoning the footsteps of the maimed and darkly-plotting Ulpus, our attention now fixes itself on the fortunes of Hermanric, and the fate of Antonina.

Although the evening had as yet scarcely closed, the Goth had allotted to the warriors under his com-

mand their different stations for the night in the lonely suburbs of the city. This duty performed, he was left to the unbroken solitude of the deserted tenement which now served him as a temporary abode.

The house he occupied was the last of the wide and irregular street in which it stood; it looked towards the wall beneath the Pincian Mount, from which it was separated by a public garden about half a mile in extent. This once well-thronged place of recreation was now totally unoccupied. Its dull groves were brightened by no human forms; the chambers of its gay summer houses were dark and desolate; the booths of its fruit and flower-sellers stood vacant on its untrodden lawns. Melancholy and forsaken, it stretched forth as a fertile solitude under the very walls of a crowded city.

And yet there was a charm inexpressibly solemn and soothing in the prospect of loneliness that it presented, as its flower-beds and trees were now gradually obscured to the eye in the shadows of the advancing night. It gained in its present refinement as much as it had lost of its former gaiety; it had its own simple attraction still, though it failed to sparkle to the eye with its accustomed illuminations, or to please the ear by the music and laughter, which rose from it in times of peace. As he looked forth over the view from the terrace of his new abode, the remembrance of the employments of his past and busy hours deserted the memory of the young Goth, leaving his

faculties free to welcome the reflections which night began insensibly to awaken and create.

Employed under such auspices, whither would the thoughts of Hermanric naturally stray?

From the moonlight that already began to ripple over the topmost trembling leaves of the trees beyond him, to the delicate and shadowy flowers that twined up the pillars of the deserted terrace where he now stood, every object he beheld connected itself, to his vivid and uncultured imagination, with the one being of whom all that was beautiful in nature, seemed to him the eloquent and befitting type. He thought of Antonina whom he had once protected; of Antonina whom he had afterwards abandoned; of Antonina whom he had now lost!

Strong in the imaginative and weak in the reasoning faculties; gifted with large moral perception and little moral firmness; too easy to be influenced and too difficult to be resolved, Hermanric had deserted the girl's interests from an infirmity of disposition, rather than from a determination of will. Now, therefore, when the employments of the day had ceased to absorb his attention; now when silence and solitude led his memory back to his morning's abandonment of his helpless charge, that act of fatal impatience and irresolution inspired him with the strongest emotions of sorrow and remorse. If during her sojourn under his care, Antonina had insensibly influenced his heart, her image, now that he reflected on his guilty share in their parting scene, filled all his thoughts, at once

saddening and shaming him, as he remembered her banishment from the shelter of his tent.

Every feeling which had animated his reflections on Antonina on the previous night, was doubled in intensity as he thought on her now. Again he recalled her eloquent words, and remembered the charm of her gentle and innocent manner; again he dwelt on the beauties of her outward form. Each warm expression; each varying intonation of voice that had accompanied her petition to him for safety and companionship; every persuasion that she had used to melt him, now revived in his memory and moved in his heart with steady influence and increasing power. All the hurried and imperfect pictures of happiness which she had drawn to allure him, now expanded and brightened, until his mind began to figure to him visions that had been hitherto unknown to faculties occupied by no other images than those of rivalry, turbulence, and strife. Scenes called into being by Antonina's lightest and hastiest expressions, now rose vague and shadowy before his brooding spirit. Lovely places of earth that he had visited and forgotten, now returned to his recollection, idealised and refined as he thought of her. She appeared to his mind in every allurement of action, fulfilling all the duties and enjoying all the pleasures that she had proposed to him. He imagined her happy and healthful, journeying gaily by his side in the fresh morning, with rosy cheek and elastic step; he imagined her delighting him by her promised songs, enlivening him by her eloquent words, in the mellow

stillness of evening; he imagined her sleeping, soft and warm and still, in his protecting arms — ever happy and ever gentle; girl in years, and woman in capacities; at once lover and companion, teacher and pupil, follower and guide!

Such she might have been once! What was she now?

Was she sinking under her loneliness, perishing from exposure and fatigue, repulsed by the cruel, or mocked by the unthinking? To all these perils and miseries had he exposed her; and to what end? To maintain the uncertain favour, to preserve the unwelcome friendship, of a woman abandoned even by the most common and intuitive virtues of her sex; whose frantic craving for revenge, confounded justice with treachery, innocence with guilt, helplessness with tyranny; whose claims of nation and relationship should have been forfeited in his estimation, by the openly-confessed malignity of her designs, at the fatal moment when she had communicated them to him in all their atrocity, before the walls of Rome. He groaned in despair, as he thought on this the most unworthy of the necessities, to which the forsaken girl had been sacrificed.

Soon, however, his mind reverted from such reflections as these, to his own duties and his own renown; and here his remorse became partially lightened, though his sorrow remained unchanged.

Wonderful as had been the influence of Antonina's presence and Antonina's words over the Goth, they had

not yet acquired power enough to smother in him entirely the warlike instincts of his sex and nation, or to vanquish the strong and hostile promptings of education and custom. She had gifted him with new emotions, and awakened him to new thoughts; she had aroused all the dormant gentleness of his disposition to war against the rugged indifference, the reckless energy, that teaching and example had hitherto made a second nature to his heart. She had wound her way into his mind, brightening its dark places, enlarging its narrow recesses, beautifying its unpolished treasures. She had created, she had refined, during her short hours of communication with him, but she had not lured his disposition entirely from its old habits and its old attachments; she had not yet stripped off the false glitter from barbarian strife, or the pomp from martial renown; she had not elevated the inferior intellectual, to the height of the superior moral faculties, in his inward composition. Submitted almost impartially to the alternate and conflicting dominion of the two masters, Love and Duty, he at once regretted Antonina, and yet clung mechanically to his old obedience to those tyrannic requirements of nation and name, which had occasioned her loss.

Oppressed by his varying emotions, destitute alike of consolation and advice, the very inaction of his present position sensibly depressed him. He rose impatiently, and buckling on his weapons, sought to escape from his thoughts, by abandoning the scene under the influence of which they had been first

aroused. Turning his back upon the city, he directed his steps at random, through the complicated labyrinth of streets, composing the extent of the deserted suburbs.

After he had passed through the dwellings comprised in the occupation of the Gothic lines, and had gained those situated nearer to the desolate country beyond, the scene around him became impressive enough to have absorbed the attention of any man not wholly occupied by other and more important objects of contemplation.

The loneliness he now beheld on all sides, was not the loneliness of ruin — the buildings near him were in perfect repair; it was not the loneliness of pestilence — there were no corpses strewn over the untrodden pavements of the streets; it was not the loneliness of seclusion — there were no barred windows, and few closed doors; it was a solitude of human annihilation. The open halls of the theatres were untenanted; the porticos of the churches were unapproached; the benches before the wine-shops were unoccupied; remains of gaudy household wares still stood on the counters of the street booths, watched by none, bought by none; particles of bread and meat (treasures, fated to become soon of greater value than silver and gold, to beleaguered Rome) rotted here in the open air, like garbage upon dunghills; children's toys, women's ornaments, purses, money, love-tokens, precious manuscripts, lay scattered hither and thither in the public ways, dropped and abandoned by their different owners, in

the hurry of their sudden and universal flight. Every deserted street was eloquent of darling projects desperately resigned, of valued labours miserably deserted, of delighting enjoyments irretrievably lost. The place was forsaken even by those household gods of rich and poor, its domestic animals. They had either followed their owners into the city, or strayed, unhindered and unwatched, into the country beyond. Mansion, bath, and circus, displayed their gaudy pomp and luxurious comfort in vain; not even a wandering Goth was to be seen near their empty halls. For, with such a prospect before them as the subjugation of Rome, the army had caught the infection of its leader's enthusiasm for his exalted task, and willingly obeyed his commands for suspending the pillage of the suburbs, disdainingly the comparatively worthless treasures around them, attainable at any time, when they felt that the rich coffers of Rome herself were now fast opening to their eager hands. Voiceless and noiseless, unpeopled and unravaged, lay the far-famed suburbs of the greatest city of the universe, sunk alike in the night of Nature, the night of Fortune, and the night of Glory!

Saddening and impressive as was the prospect thus presented to the eyes of the young Goth, it failed to weaken the powerful influence that his evening's meditations yet held over his mind. As, during the hours that were passed, the image of the forsaken girl had dissipated the remembrance of the duties he had performed, and opposed the contemplation of the commands he was yet to fulfil, so it now denied to his

faculties any impressions from the lonely scene, beheld, yet unnoticed, which spread around him. Still, as he passed through the gloomy streets, his vain regrets and self-accusations, his natural predilections and acquired attachments, ruled over him and contended within him, as sternly and as unceasingly as in the first moments when they had arisen with the evening, during his sojourn in the terrace of the deserted house.

He had now arrived at the extremest boundary of the buildings in the suburbs. Before him lay an uninterrupted prospect of smooth, shining fields, and soft, hazy, indefinable woods. At one side of him were some vineyards and cottage gardens; at the other was a solitary house, the outermost of all the abodes in his immediate vicinity. Dark and cheerless as it was, he regarded it for some time with the mechanical attention of a man more occupied in thought than observation, — gradually advancing towards it in the moody abstraction of his reflections, until he unconsciously paused before the low range of irregular steps which led to its entrance door.

Startled from his meditations by his sudden proximity to the object that he had unwittingly approached, he now, for the first time, examined the lonely abode before him with real attention.

There was nothing remarkable about the house, save the extreme desolateness of its appearance, which seemed to arise partly from its isolated position, and partly from the unusual absence of all decoration on

its external front. It was too extensive to have been the dwelling of a poor man, too void of pomp and ornament to have been a mansion of the rich. It might, perhaps, have belonged to some citizen, or foreigner, of the middle class — some moody Northman, some solitary Egyptian, some scheming Jew. Yet, though it was not possessed, in itself, of any remarkable or decided character, the Goth experienced a mysterious, almost an eager curiosity to examine its interior. He could assign no cause, discover no excuse for the act, as he slowly mounted the steps before him. Some invisible and incomprehensible magnet attracted him to the dwelling. If his return had been suddenly commanded by Alaric himself; if evidences of indubitable treachery had lurked about the solitary place, at the moment when he thrust open its unbarred door, he felt that he must still have proceeded upon his onward course.

The next instant he entered the house. The light streamed through the open entrance into the gloomy hall; the night-wind, rushing upon its track, blew shrill and dreary among the stone pillars, and in the hidden crevices and untenanted chambers above. Not a sign of life appeared, not a sound of a footstep was audible, not even an article of household use was to be seen. The deserted suburbs rose without, like a wilderness; and this empty house looked within, like a sepulchre — void of corpses, and yet eloquent of death!

There was an inexplicable fascination to the eyes

of the Goth about this vault-like, solitary hall. He stood motionless at its entrance, gazing dreamily at the gloomy prospect before him, until a strong gust of wind suddenly forced the outer door further backwards, and at the same moment admitted a larger stream of light.

The place was not empty. In a corner of the hall, hitherto sunk in darkness, crouched a shadowy form. It was enveloped in a dark garment, and huddled up into an indefinable and unfamiliar shape. Nothing appeared on it, as a denoting sign of humanity, but one pale hand, holding the black drapery together, and relieved against it in almost ghastly contrast under the cold light of the moon.

Vague remembrances of the awful superstitions of his nation's ancient worship, hurried over the memory of the young Goth, at the first moment of his discovery of the ghost-like occupant of the hall. As he stood in fixed attention before the motionless figure, it soon began to be endowed with the same strange influence over his will, that the lonely house had already exerted. He advanced slowly towards the crouching form.

It never stirred at the noise of his approach. The pale hand still held the mantle over the compressed figure, with the same rigid immobility of grasp. Brave as he was, Hermanric shuddered as he bent down and touched the bloodless, icy fingers. At that action, as if endowed with instant vitality from contact with a living being, the figure suddenly started up.

Then, the folds of the dark mantle fell back, disclosing a face as pale in hue as the stone pillars around it; and the voice of the solitary being became audible, uttering in faint, monotonous accents, these words: —

“He has forgotten and abandoned me! — slay me if you will! — I am ready to die!”

Broken, untuned as it was, there yet lurked in that voice a tone of its old music, there beamed in that vacant and heavy eye a ray of its native gentleness. With a sudden exclamation of compassion and surprise, the Goth stepped forward, raised the trembling outcast in his arms; and, in the impulse of the moment quitting the solitary house, stood the next instant on the firm earth, and under the starry sky, once more united to the charge that he had abandoned — to Antonina whom he had lost.

He spoke to her, caressed her, entreated her pardon, assured her of his future care; but she neither answered nor recognised him. She never looked in his face, never moved in his arms, never petitioned for mercy. She gave no sign of life or being, saving that she moaned at regular intervals in piteous accents: — “He has forgotten and abandoned me!” as if that one simple expression comprised in itself, her acknowledgment of the uselessness of her life, and her dirge for her expected death.

The Goth’s countenance whitened to his very lips. He began to fear that her faculties had sunk under her trials. He hurried on with her with trembling

steps towards the open country, for he nourished a dreamy, intuitive hope, that the sight of those woods and fields and mountains which she had extolled to him, in her morning's entreaty for protection, might aid in restoring her suspended consciousness, if she now looked on them.

He ran forward, until he had left the suburbs at least half a mile behind him, and had reached an eminence, bounded on each side by high grass banks and clustering woods, and commanding a narrow, yet various prospect, of the valley ground beneath, and the fertile plains that extended beyond.

Here the warrior paused with his burden; and, seating himself on the bank, once more attempted to calm the girl's continued bewilderment and terror. He thought not on his sentinels, whom he had abandoned — on his absence from the suburbs, which might be perceived and punished by an unexpected visit, at his deserted quarters, from his superiors in the camp. The social influence that sways the world; the fragile idol at whose shrine pride learns to bow, and insensibility to feel; the soft, grateful influence of yielding nature yet eternal rule — the influence of woman, source alike of virtues and crimes, of earthly glories and earthly disasters — had, in this moment of anguish and expectation, silenced in him every appeal of duty, and overthrown every obstacle of selfish doubt. He now spoke to Antonina as alluringly as a woman, as gently as a child. He caressed her as warmly as a lover, as cheerfully as a brother, as

kindly as a father. He — the rough, northern warrior, whose education had been of arms, and whose youthful aspirations had been taught to point towards strife and bloodshed and glory — even he was now endowed with the tender eloquence of pity and love — with untiring, skilful care — with calm, enduring patience.

Gently and unceasingly he plied his soothing task; and soon, to his joy and triumph, he beheld the approaching reward of his efforts, in the slow changes that became gradually perceptible in the girl's face and manner. She raised herself in his arms, looked up fixedly and vacantly into his face, then round upon the bright, quiet landscape, then back again more steadfastly upon her companion; and at length, trembling violently, she whispered softly and several times the young Goth's name, glancing at him anxiously and apprehensively, as if she feared and doubted while she recognised him.

"You are bearing me to my death," — said she suddenly. "*You*, who once protected me — *you*, who forsook me! — You are luring me into the power of the woman who thirsts for my blood! — Oh, it is horrible — horrible!"

She paused, averted her face, and shuddering violently, disengaged herself from his arms. After an interval, she continued: —

"Through the long day, and in the beginning of the cold night, I have waited in one solitary place for the death that is in store for me! I have suffered all the loneliness of my hours of expectation, without com-

plaint; I have listened with little dread, and no grief, for the approach of my enemy who has sworn that she will shed my blood! Having none to love me, and being a stranger in the land of my own nation, I have nothing to live for! But it is a bitter misery to me to behold in *you* the fulfiller of my doom; to be snatched by the hand of Hermanric from the heritage of life that I have so long struggled to preserve!"

Her voice had altered, as she pronounced these words, to an impressive lowness and mournfulness of tone. Its quiet, saddened accents were expressive of an almost divine resignation and sorrow, they seemed to be attuned to a mysterious and untraceable harmony with the melancholy stillness of the night-landscape. As she now stood looking up with pale, calm countenance, and gentle, tearless eyes into the sky whose moonlight brightness shone softly over her form, the Virgin watching the approach of her angel messenger could hardly have been adorned with a more pure and simple loveliness, than now dwelt over the features of Numerian's forsaken child.

No longer master of his agitation; filled with awe, grief, and despair, as he looked on the victim of his heartless impatience; Hermanric bowed himself at the girl's feet, and, in the passionate utterance of real remorse, offered up his supplications for pardon and his assurances of protection and love. All that the reader has already learned — the bitter self-upbraidings of his evening, the sorrowful wanderings of his night, the mysterious attraction that led him to the solitary

house, his joy at once more discovering his lost charge — all these confessions he now poured forth in the simple yet powerful eloquence of strong emotion and true regret.

Gradually and amazedly, as she listened to his words, Antonina awoke from her abstraction. Even the expression of his countenance and the earnestness of his manner, viewed by the intuitive penetration of her sex, wrought with kind and healing influence on her mind. She started suddenly, a bright flush flew over her colourless cheeks; she bent down, and looked earnestly and wistfully into the Goth's face. Her lips moved, but her quick convulsive breathing stifled the words that she vainly endeavoured to form.

“Yes,” continued Hermanric, rising and drawing her towards him again, “you shall never mourn, never fear, never weep more! Though you have lost your father, and the people of your nation are as strangers to you, though you have been threatened and forsaken, you shall still be beautiful — still be happy; for I will watch you, and you shall never be harmed; I will labour for you, and you shall never want! People and kindred — fame and duty, I will abandon them all to make atonement to *you!*”

Its youthful freshness and hope returned to the girl's heart, as water to the long-parched spring, when the young warrior ceased. The tears stood in her eyes, but she neither sighed nor spoke. Her frame trembled all over with the excess of her astonishment

and delight, as she still steadfastly looked on him and still listened intently as he proceeded: —

“Fear, then, no longer for your safety — Goisvintha, whom you dread, is far from us; she knows not that we are here; she cannot track our footsteps now, to threaten or to harm you! Remember no more how you have suffered and I have sinned! Think only how bitterly I have repented our morning’s separation, and how gladly I welcome our meeting of to-night! Oh, Antonina! you are beautiful with a wondrous loveliness, you are young with a perfected and unchildlike youth, your words fall upon my ear with the music of a song of the olden time; it is like a dream of the spirits that my fathers worshipped, when I look up and behold you at my side!”

An expression of mingled confusion, pleasure, and surprise, flushed the girl’s half-averted countenance as she listened to the Goth. She rose with a smile of ineffable gratitude and delight, and pointed to the prospect beyond, as she softly rejoined: —

“Let us go a little further onward, where the moonlight shines over the meadow below. My heart is bursting in this shadowy place! Let us seek the light that is yonder; it seems happy like me!”

They walked forward; and as they went, she told him again of the sorrows of her past day; of her lonely and despairing progress from his tent to the solitary house where he had found her in the night, and where she had resigned herself from the first to meet a death that had little horror for her then. There was no

thought of reproach, no utterance of complaint, in this renewal of her melancholy narration. It was solely that she might luxuriate afresh in those delighting expressions of repentance and devotion, which she knew that it would call forth from the lips of Hermanric, that she now thought of addressing him once more with the tale of her grief.

As they still went onward; as she listened to the rude fervent eloquence of the language of the Goth; as she looked on the deep repose of the landscape, and the soft transparency of the night sky; her mind, ever elastic under the shock of the most violent emotions, ever ready to regain its wonted healthfulness and hope — now recovered its old tone, and re-assumed its accustomed balance. Again her memory began to store itself with its beloved remembrances, and her heart to rejoice in its artless longings and visionary thoughts. In spite of all her fears and all her sufferings, she now walked on blest in a disposition that woe had no shadow to darken long, and neglect no influence to warp; still as happy in herself; even yet as forgetful of her past, as hopeful for her future, as on that first evening when we beheld her in her father's garden, singing to the music of her lute.

Insensibly as they proceeded, they had diverged from the road, had entered a bye-path, and now stood before a gate which led to a small farm house, surrounded by its gardens and vineyards, and like the suburbs that they had quitted, deserted by its inhabitants on the approach of the Goths. They passed

through the gate, and arriving at the plot of ground in front of the house, paused for a moment to look around them.

The meadows had been already stripped of their grass, and the young trees of their branches by the foragers of the invading army, but here the destruction of the little property had been stayed. The house with its neat thatched roof and shutters of variegated wood, the garden with its small stock of fruit and its carefully tended beds of rare flowers, designed probably to grace the feast of a nobleman or the statue of a martyr, had presented no allurements to the rough tastes of Alaric's soldiery. Not a mark of a footstep appeared on the turf before the house door; the ivy crept in its wonted luxuriance about the pillars of the lowly porch; and as Hermanric and Antonina walked towards the fish-pond at the extremity of the garden, the few water fowl placed there by the owners of the cottage, came swimming towards the bank, as if to welcome in their solitude the appearance of a human form.

Far from being melancholy, there was something soothing and attractive about the loneliness of the deserted farm. Its ravaged outhouses and plundered meadows, which might have appeared desolate by day, were so distanced, softened, and obscured, by the atmosphere of night, that they presented no harsh contrast to the prevailing smoothness and luxuriance of the landscape around. As Antonina beheld the brightened fields and the shadowed woods, here mingled, there succeeding

each other, stretched far onward and onward until they joined the distant mountains, that eloquent voice of nature, whose audience is the human heart, and whose theme is eternal love, spoke inspiringly to her attentive senses. She stretched out her arms as she looked with steady and enraptured gaze upon the bright view before her, as if she longed to see its beauties resolved into a single and living form — into a spirit human enough to be addressed, and visible enough to be adored.

“Beautiful earth!” she murmured softly to herself, “Thy mountains are the watch-towers of angels, thy moonlight is the shadow of God!”

Her eyes filled with bright, happy tears; she turned to Hermanric, who stood watching her, and continued: —

“Have you never thought that light, and air, and the perfume of flowers, might contain some relics of the beauties of Eden that escaped with Eve, when she wandered into the lonely world? *They* glowed and breathed for *her*, and *she* lived and was beautiful in *them*! They were united to one another, as the sun-beam is united to the earth that it warms; and could the sword of the cherubim have sundered them at once? When Eve went forth, did the closed gates shut back in the empty Paradise, all the beauty that had clung, and grown, and shone round her? Did no ray of her native light steal forth after her into the desolateness of the world? Did no print of her lost flowers remain on the bosom they must once have

pressed? It cannot be! A part of her possessions of Eden must have been spared to her with a part of her life. She must have refined the void air of the earth when she entered it, with a breath of the fragrant breezes, and a gleam of the truant sunshine of her lost Paradise! They must have strengthened and brightened, and must now be strengthening and brightening with the slow lapse of mortal years, until, in the time when earth itself will be an Eden, they shall be made one again with the hidden world of perfection, from which they are yet separated. So that, even now, as I look forth over the landscape, the light that I behold has in it a glow of Paradise, and this flower that I gather a breath of the fragrance that once stole over the senses of my first mother, Eve!"

Though she paused here, as if in expectation of an answer, the Goth preserved an unbroken silence. Neither by nature nor position was he capable of partaking the wild fancies and aspiring thoughts, drawn by the influences of the external world from their concealment in Antonina's heart.

The mystery of his present situation, his vague remembrances of the duties he had abandoned; the uncertainty of his future fortunes and future fate; the presence of the lonely being so inseparably connected with his past emotions and his existence to come, so strangely attractive by her sex, her age, her person, her misfortunes, and her endowments; all contributed to bewilder his faculties. Goisvintha, the army, the besieged city, the abandoned suburbs, seemed to him

like a circle of shadowy and threatening judgments; and in the midst of them stood the young denizen of Rome, with her eloquent countenance and her inspiring words, ready to hurry him, he knew not whither, and able to influence him, he felt not how.

Unconsciously interpreting her companion's silence into a wish to change the scene and the discourse, Antonina, after lingering over the view from the garden for a moment longer, led the way back towards the untenanted house. They removed the wooden padlock from the door of the dwelling, and guided by the brilliant moonlight, entered its principal apartment.

The homely adornments of the little room had remained undisturbed, and dimly distinguishable though they now were, gave it to the eyes of the two strangers, the same aspect of humble comfort which had probably once endeared it to its exiled occupants. As Hermanric seated himself by Antonina's side on the simple couch which made the principal piece of furniture in the place, and looked forth from the window over the same view that they had beheld in the garden, the magic stillness and novelty of the scene now began to affect his slow perceptions, as they had already influenced the finer and more sensitive faculties of the thoughtful girl. New hopes and tranquil ideas arose in his young mind, and communicated an unusual gentleness to his expression, an unusual

softness to his voice, as he thus addressed his silent companion: —

“With such a home as this, with this garden, with that country beyond, with no warfare, no stern teachers, no enemy to threaten you; with companions and occupations that you loved — tell me, Antonina, would not your happiness be complete?”

As he looked round at the girl to listen to her reply, he saw that her countenance had changed. Their past expression of deep grief had again returned to her features. Her eyes were fixed on the short dagger that hung over the Goth's breast, which seemed to have suddenly aroused in her a train of melancholy and unwelcome thoughts. When she at length spoke, it was in a mournful and altered voice, and with a mingled expression of resignation and despair.

“You must leave me — we must be parted again,” said she; “the sight of your weapons has reminded me of all that until now I had forgotten, of all that I have left in Rome, of all that you have abandoned before the city walls. Once I thought we might have escaped together from the turmoil and the danger around us, but now I know that it is better that you should depart! Alas! for my hopes and my happiness, I must be left alone once more!”

She paused for an instant, struggling to retain her self-possession, and then continued: —

“Yes, you must quit me, and return to your post before the city; for in the day of assault there will be

none to care for my father but you! Until I know that he is safe, until I can see him once more, and ask him for pardon, and entreat him for love, I dare not remove from the perilous precincts of Rome! Return, then, to your duties, and your companions, and your occupations of martial renown; and do not forget Numerian when the city is assailed, nor Antonina, who is left to think on you in the solitary plains!"

She rose from her place, as if to set the example of departing; but her strength and resolution both failed her, and she sank down again on the couch, incapable of making another movement, or uttering another word.

Strong and conflicting emotions passed over the heart of the Goth. The language of the girl had quickened the remembrance of his half-forgotten duties, and strengthened the failing influence of his old predilections of education and race. Both conscience and inclination now opposed his disputing her urgent and unselfish request. For a few minutes he remained in deep reflection; then he rose and looked earnestly from the window; then back again upon Antonina and the room they occupied. At length, as if animated by a sudden determination, he again approached his companion, and thus addressed her: —

"It is right that I should return. I will do your bidding, and depart for the camp (but not till the break of day), while you, Antonina, remain in concealment and in safety here. None can come hither to disturb you. The Goths will not revisit the fields

they have already stripped; the husbandman who owns this dwelling is imprisoned in the beleaguered city; the peasants from the country beyond dare not approach so near to the invading hosts; and Goisvintha, whom you dread, knows not even of the existence of such a refuge as this. Here, though lonely, you will be secure; here you can await my return, when each succeeding night gives me the opportunity of departing from the camp; and here I will warn you beforehand, if the city is devoted to an assault. Though solitary, you will not be abandoned — we shall not be parted one from the other. Often and often I shall return to look on you, and to listen to you, and to love you! You will be happier here, even in this lonely place, than in the former home that you have lost through your father's wrath!"

"Oh! I will willingly remain — I will joyfully await you!" cried the girl, raising her beaming eyes to Hermanric's face. "I will never speak mournfully to you again; I will never remind you more of all that I have suffered; and all that I have lost! How merciful you were to me, when I first saw you in your tent — how doubly merciful you are to me here! I am proud when I look on your stature, and your strength, and your heavy weapons, and know that you are happy in remaining with *me*; that you will succour my father; that you will return from your glittering encampments to this farm-house, where I am left to await you! Already I have forgotten all that has happened to me of woe; already I am more joyful than

ever I was in my life before! See, I am no longer weeping in sorrow! If there are any tears still on my cheeks, they are the tears of gladness that every one welcomes — tears to sing and rejoice in!”

She ceased abruptly, as if words failed to give expression to her new delight. All the gloomy emotions that had oppressed her but a short time before had now completely vanished; and the young, fresh heart, superior still to despair and woe, basked as happily again in its native atmosphere of joy as a bird in the sunlight of morning and spring.

Then, when after an interval of delay their former tranquillity had returned to them, how softly and lightly the quiet hours of the remaining night flowed onward to the two watchers in the lonely house! How gladly the delighted girl disclosed her hidden thoughts, and poured forth her innocent confessions, to the dweller among other nations and the child of other impressions than her own! All the various reflections aroused in her mind by the natural objects she had secretly studied, by the mighty imagery of her Bible lore, by the gloomy histories of saints' visions and martyrs' sufferings, which she had learnt and pondered over by her father's side, were now drawn from their treasured places in her memory, and addressed to the ear of the Goth. As the child flies to the nurse with the story of its first toy; as the girl resorts to the sister with the confession of her first love; as the poet hurries to the friend with the plan of his first composition; so did Antonina seek the attention of Her-

manic with the first outward revealings enjoyed by her faculties and the first acknowledgment of her emotions liberated from her heart.

The longer the Goth listened to her, the more perfect became the enchantment of her words, half struggling into poetry, and her voice half gliding into music. As her low, still, varying tones wound smoothly into his ear, his thoughts suddenly and intuitively reverted to her formerly expressed remembrances of her lost lute, inciting him to ask her, with new interest and animation, of the manner of her acquisition of that knowledge of song, which she had already assured him that she possessed.

“I have learned many odes of many poets,” said she, quickly and confusedly avoiding the mention of Vetrico, which a direct answer to Hermanric’s question must have produced, “but I remember none perfectly, save those whose theme is of spirits and of other worlds, and of the invisible beauty that we think of, but cannot see. Of the few that I know of these, there is one that I first learned and loved most. I will sing it, that you may be assured I will not fail to you in my promised art.”

She hesitated for a moment. Sorrowful remembrances of the events that had followed the utterance of the last notes she sang in her father’s garden, swelled within her, and held her speechless. Soon, however, after a short interval of silence, she recovered her self-possession, and began to sing, in low, tremulous tones, that harmonised well with the character of the

words and the strain of the melody which she had chosen.

THE MISSION OF THE TEAR.

I.

The skies were its birth-place — the TEAR was the child
Of the dark maiden SORROW, by young JOY beguil'd;
It was born in convulsion; 'twas nurtur'd in woe;
And the world was yet young when it wander'd below.

II.

No angel-bright guardians watch'd over its birth,
Ere yet it was suffer'd to roam upon earth;
No spirits of gladness its soft form caress'd;
SIGNS mourn'd round its cradle, and hush'd it to rest.

III.

Though JOY might endeavour, with kisses and wiles,
To lure it away to his household of smiles:
From the daylight he lived in it turn'd in affright,
To nestle with SORROW in climates of night.

IV.

When it came upon earth, 'twas to choose a career,
The brightest and best that is left to a TEAR;
To hallow delight, and bestow the relief
Denied by despair to the fulness of grief.

V.

Few repell'd it — some bless'd it — wherever it came;
Whether soft'ning their sorrow, or soothing their shame;
And the joyful themselves, though its name they might fear,
Oft welcom'd the calming approach of the TEAR!

VI.

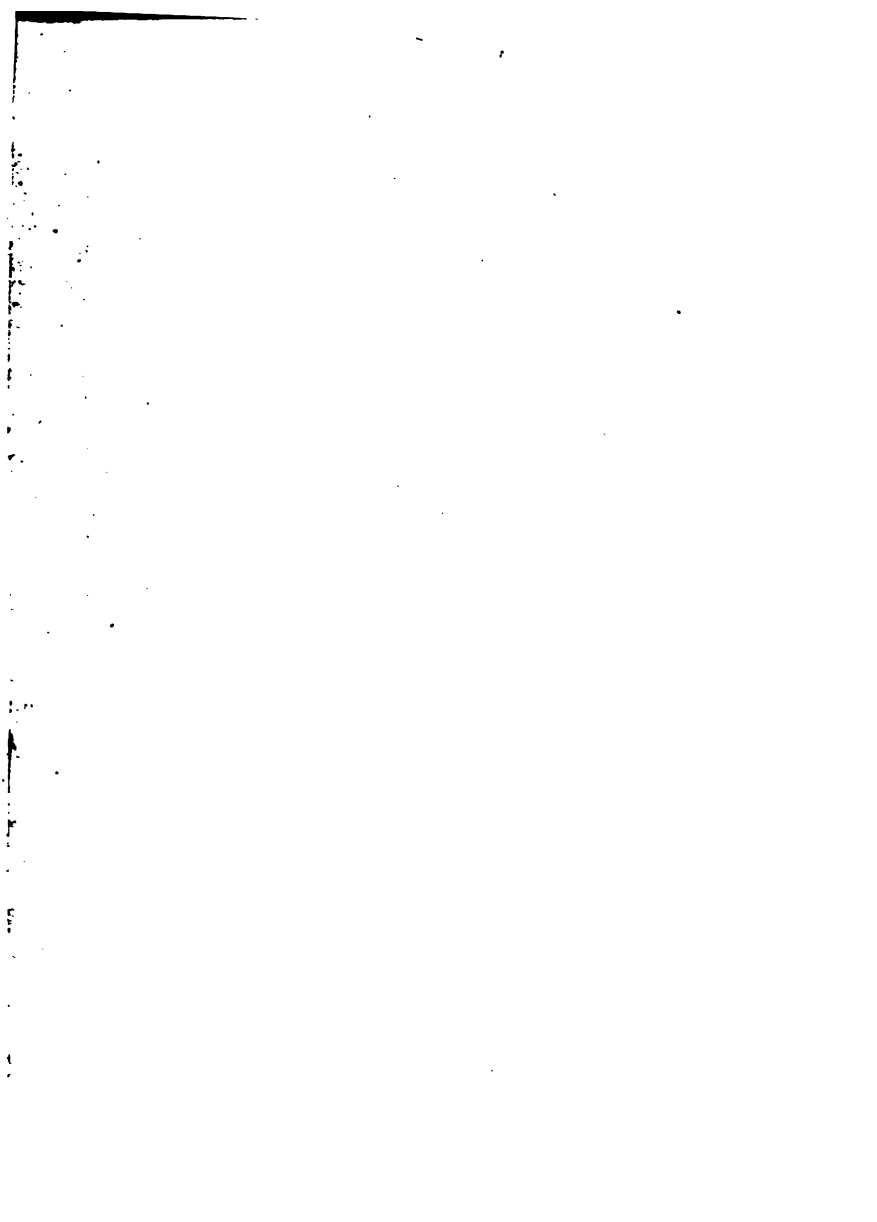
Years on years have worn onward, as — watch'd from above —
Speeds that meek spirit yet on its labour of love;
Still the exile of Heav'n, it ne'er shall away,
Every heart has a home for it, roam where it may!

For the first few minutes after she had concluded the ode, Hermanric was hardly conscious that she had ceased; and when at length she looked up at him, her mute petition for approval had an eloquence which would have been marred to the Goth at that moment, by the utterance of a single word. A rapture, an inspiration, a new life moved within him. The hour and the scene completed what the magic of the song had begun. His expressions now glowed with a southern warmth; his words assumed a Roman fervour. Gradually, as they discoursed, the voice of the girl was less frequently audible. A change was passing over her spirit; from the teacher, she was now becoming the pupil.

As she still listened to the Goth, as she felt the birth of new feelings within her while he spoke, her cheeks glowed, her features lightened up, her very form seemed to freshen and expand. No intruding thought or awakening remembrance disturbed her rapt attention. No cold doubt, no gloomy hesitation, appeared in her companion's words. The one listened, the other spoke, with the whole heart, the undivided soul. While a world-wide revolution was concentrating its hurricane forces around them; while the city of an Empire tottered already to its tremendous fall; while Goisvintha plotted new revenge; while Ulpius toiled for his revolution of bloodshed and ruin; while all these dark materials of public misery and private strife seethed and strengthened around them, they could as completely forget the stormy outward world, in them-

selves; they could think as serenely of tranquil love; the kiss could be given as passionately and returned as tenderly, as if the lot of their existence had been cast in the pastoral days of the shepherd poets, and the future of their duties and enjoyments was securely awaiting them in a land of eternal peace!

END OF VOL. I.





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